# COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 97
Dec. 2002

ACTION COMICS
"The Super-Key to Fort Superman!"
IT WOULD TAKE ONE HUNDRED MEN TO LIFT THIS SUPER-KEY--YET SOMEONE HAS MANAGED TO USE IT! WHO COULD IT BE?
FORT SUPERMAN

SUPERMAN
Sensation! "CLARK KENT ABANDONS SUPERMAN!"
"I QUIT! I'M THROUGH BEING SUPERMAN FOR GOOD!"
WORLD'S BEST-SELLING COMICS MAGAZINE!

WORLD'S FINEST
"The Origin of the Composite Superman!"
BATMAN AND SUPERMAN! MY TELEPATHIC POWERS REVEAL YOU'RE SECRETLY BRUCE WAYNE AND CLARK KENT! LET ME JOIN YOU AS A THIRD PARTNER, OR I'LL EXPOSE YOU BOTH!
GREAT KRYPTON! HE ALSO HAS THE POWERS OF INVISIBLE KID, LIGHTNING LAD AND CHAMELEON BOY! HE'S A ONE-MAN LEGION!
20 SUPER-POWERS!
INVULNERABILITY
INVISIBILITY
MIND READING
LIGHTNING BOLTS
COMPUTER MIND
MAGNETISM
ELASTICITY
TRIPLICATE BODIES
MASTERY OF ELEMENTS
CHAMELEON POWERS
GRAVITY
FLYING SPEED
X-RAY VISION

SECRET LIVES OF SUPERBOY!
Adventure COMICS
featuring SUPERBOY and the LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
YOU'LL BE STUNNED WHEN YOU SEE THE FANTASTIC POWERS OF THE NEW MEMBERS WHO REPLACE THE LEGIONNAIRES WHO ARE DROPOUTS!
LEGION CONSTITUTION, THEY MUST QUIT THE LEGION.
8 SUPER-POWERS OF NEW LEGIONNAIRES SUGGESTED BY OUR READERS!

SUPERMAN'S PAL
JIMMY OLSEN
EVEN SUPERMAN CRIES "U.N.C.L.E." WHEN HE SEES HOW AGENT DOUBLE-O OLSEN ENDOWED WITH SPIES AND THEIR GADGETS in "OLSEN'S SUPER SURVIVAL KIT!"
SHEE-WHEEE
PARTIAL CONTENTS, SURVIVAL KIT
1. FLASHLIGHT PARACHUTE-EJECTOR
2. LAPEL LASER BEAM
3. SIREN RING
4. BUTTON FLAME-THROWER
5. SECRET WEAPON

SUPERBOY
NO PULSE AT ALL... MY BEST FRIEND... SUPERBOY... IS DEAD FROM "VIRUS X"!
Featuring "SUPERBOY'S GREATEST HOAX!"
POOR PETE! HE DOESN'T KNOW I'M USING SUPER WILL-POWER TO MAKE MY HEART STOP BEATING! I MUST TRICK HIM INTO BELIEVING THAT MY DOG KRYPTO AND I HAVE DIED!

CURT SWAN

$5.95 U.S./$8.95 Can.
GEMSTONE PUBLISHING
ARTWORK © DC COMICS INC.

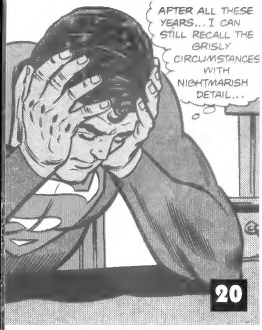
# COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 97
Dec. 2002

$5.95 U.S./$8.95 Can.
GEMSTONE PUBLISHING
ARTWORK © JOHN CARBONARO

# CBM CONTENTS

97 Dec
NUMBER 2002




## FEATURES

**Curt Swan: A Life in Comics!**
*He Flew with Superman! by Edward Zeno* ..... **20**

**Days of T.H.U.N.D.E.R.!**
*Wally Wood's Last Hurrah! by Todd Severin* ..... **38**

**T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents' John Carbonaro!**
*Thunder Struck Twice! by Jennifer M. Contino* ..... **51**

## COLUMNS

**Nolan's Notebook**
*Time-Line Facts You May Not Have Realized! by Michelle Nolan* . **8**

**Funnies Farrago**
*Setting the Fashion with the Patterson Girl! by R.C. Harvey* ..... **16**

**Oddball Comics**
*Oddballs Roasting O'er an Open Fire! by Scott Shaw!* ..... **57**

**The Greatest Comic Book Ever**
*A Double Dose of Christmas Cheer! by Mark Squirek* ..... **58**

**Book Review**
*Curt Swan: A Life in Comics! review by Paul Gravett* ..... **62**

**The Naiman Report**
*Super, Boy! by Michael Naiman* ..... **73**

**CBM MarketWatch and Market Reports**
*Sampling marketplace indicator sales! Compiled by Michael Naiman* ... **74**

© JOHN CARBONARO

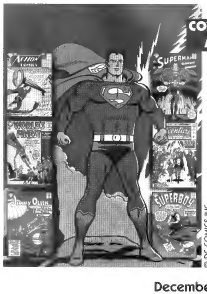
*Volume 3 • Number 97*
*December 2002*
*A Gemstone Publication*

**DEPARTMENTS**

Back Issue Dept. .....7
Inspiration Central:
Jim Shooter.....67
Collectable Character
Statues .....70
Advertising & Subs .....69

ABOUT THE COVERS:
Cover A - Superman, Batman and related indicia © 2002 DC Comics, Inc. Cover B - T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents © 2002 by John Carbonaro.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
**Comic Book Marketplace** – Gemstone Publishing, Inc. copyright ©2002 Stephen A. Geppi, all rights reserved under international and Pan-American copyright conventions. The information in this publication is protected under U.S. copyright law. Absolutely no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form whatsoever (including mechanically, photographically, and/or electronically), without the prior written consent of the publisher. All articles and columns are the express opinion of the individual contributing artists and authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Gemstone Publishing, Comic Book Marketplace, its staff, or its advertisers. All characters, names, logos, trademarks, and symbols depicted and/or described in articles and other editorial material are owned and copyrighted by their individual companies. Inquiries regarding **advertising** should be addressed to Stephanie, **888-375-9800**, ext. 249 or ext. 413. Inquiries regarding this **publication** and letters to the editor should be addressed to Comic Book Marketplace, c/o Gemstone Publishing, Inc. (Mailloux), PO Box 469, West Plains, MO 65775-0469, telephone **(417) 256-9224**, FAX (417) 256-5555. 12 issue 1st class subscription $60 (residents of Missouri and Maryland add applicable sales tax), $60 (Canada and Mexico, US funds), $110 (United Kingdom and Western Europe, US funds), $100 (Japan and Philippines, US funds). Advertising and subscription rates may change without notice. **Issue Number 97, December 2002**



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The results from our reader survey are coming in now, and although less than 50 have been received so far, we are seeing some trends. Your favorite feature in *CBM*, issue after issue, is Michelle Nolan's column, "Nolan's Notebook," and I must say I couldn't agree more. Michelle combines an interesting writing style with a very deep and detailed knowledge of comic books. And a real love for comic books, which is very important too. I first met Michelle 'way back in the early Seventies—I think we met at the San Diego Convention, back when it was at the old El Cortez Hotel.

This past summer I attended Don Maris's Big D Collectibles Show in Dallas. I hadn't been to a convention in Texas in a long time (since Sammy was a baby), and I thought it was about time I saw old friends like Don, Willie Patterson, Bob Beerbohm, Ben Stevens, and others again. And, to my surprise, Michelle Nolan was there! She spent several hours visiting at our table, talking, and once again, it is her enthusiasm for comics in general plus the fact that she knows what she is talking about that makes me turn to her column first in each new issue of *CBM*. Congratulations, Michelle, and keep up the good work!

Back to the survey now. If we receive 100 responses to this survey, which was included in 4500 copies of *CBM*, what does that say about the 4400 readers who did not respond? It must be that either they like the magazine the way it is heading now, or, they don't care enough about changing it to respond to the survey.

But even if we only receive 100 responses, that is a tiny tip of the iceberg, and we will respond to the two or three percent of our readers who cared enough to return the survey.

I can already see, from the responses received so far, that your favorite major articles have been the ones about legendary comics creators like Will Eisner, Joe Kubert, George Evans, Johnny Craig and so on, and that is no surprise at all. What is a little bit of a surprise is the high ratings being given to our major articles about Hal Foster and Alex Raymond. These articles were rated between 3 and 5 on most responses. And, as a teacher, that pleases me.

Many of you may not know this about me, but I earned a PhD in Physics and was a professor at Drake University for ten years between 1964 and 1974. I was then, and have always been, a teacher at heart. Each time you read the interviews with the Murphy Andersons, Joe Kuberts, Jack Kirbys—the giants of our hobby—every time they mention they were inspired by Hal Foster, Alex Raymond and Milton Caniff. These three comic strip artists were huge hero figures to the generation of comic artists that were lucky enough to be reading the Sunday comic pages between 1932 and 1940. It would be hard to overstate their profound influence on the hundreds of budding artists who worked in the comic book industry from the late 1930s through the 1960s.

So it is the teacher in me that wants to take comic book fans by the hand and show them and tell them why the work of Foster and Raymond and Caniff was so powerful and influential, even though none of these three giants ever worked in comic books.

The pendulum is swinging back again now. I have gone off on a tangent, to a certain degree, by including these visits to Foster, Raymond, and Caniff. This magazine is still about comic books, not comic strips. I am ***not*** being apologetic about these little side trips. They were teaching excursions. I enjoyed bringing them to you, and if you read them and gave them some of your attention, I hope you are better off for having that experience.

Pendulums don't just hang there. They swing. Let me know what you would like to see in the next swing of the *CBM* pendulum.

Russ


# COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

STEPHEN A. GEPPI
*President and Chief Executive Officer*

JOHN K. SNYDER, JR.
*Chief Administrative Officer*

RUSS COCHRAN
*Editor & Publisher*

ED ROCK
*Associate Editor*

J.C. VAUGHN
*Associate Publisher*

ARNOLD T. BLUMBERG
*East Coast Editor*

MICHAEL KRONENBERG
*Feature Designer*

BILL BAKER
JENNIFER CONTINO
R.C. HARVEY
MICHELLE NOLAN
MARK SQUIREK
MIKE WILBUR
*Columnists*

**PRICING & MARKET REPORTS**
ROBERT M. OVERSTREET
*Senior Pricing Editor*

MICHAEL NAIMAN
*Market Reports Editor*
mnaiman1@cox.net

MARK HUESMAN
*Pricing Coordinator*
feedback@gemstonepub.com

**ADVERTISING**
ANGELA MEYER
*Traffic & Operations Manager*
ec@gemstonepub.com
Toll Free (800) 392-7978

BRENDA BUSICK
*Creative Director*
bbrenda@gemstonepub.com

**RESEARCH**
JOE McGUCKIN
mjoe@diamondgalleries.com

**CUSTOMER SERVICE & ADMINISTRATION**
JUDY GOODWIN
*Customer Service Manager*
cbm@gemstonepub.com
Toll Free (800) 392-7978
Or (417) 256-2224

**a.** A Dark Knight detective driven by vengeance. **b.** A story of tragedy overcome by true heroism. **c.** The embodiment of American ideals. **d.** A wedding with at least one unknown participant. **e.** High-flying adventure with a patriotic flair. **f.** Defenders of freedom and justice. **g.** An ageless all-American teen. **h.** A young girl turned savior of the innocent.

a. b. c. d. e. f. g. h.

All characters ©Copyright 2001 respective Copyright holders. All rights reserved.

# So You Think You Know What Comics Are About?

Geppi's Comic World started out in the basement of a TV repair store more than 27 years ago and went on to become a true Maryland success story. Now you can visit our new store stocked with an amazing array of comics, magazines, graphic novels, trade paperbacks, hard cover collections and other great items. Rediscover the magic at our brand new location!

Geppi's Comic World

**A BALTIMORE TRADITION SINCE 1974!**

1116 N. Rolling Road - Baltimore, MD 21228 - (410)788-0900

## MARKETPLACE MAIL

### The Mark of Toth

Hi. My thanks to everyone for reprinting my Zorro article. I heard from Alex Toth that he was especially appreciative—"kudos," as he says.

There are some things I did not know when I wrote that article in 1993. For one thing, the artist that drew issues 10 and 11 was Mel Keefer—this was pointed out to me by DC artist-and-comics-fan-extraordinaire Kevin Nowlan and confirmed by Alex Toth. Keefer also drew "The Swamp Fox" in the Dell *Walt Disney Presents* title, and other comics. He would make a great story sometime, and I'd like to read it.

Alex told me something that boggles my mind, as much as his fabulous Zorro art—he did all those one-page California history and back cover pieces sitting in the office at Western Publishing when he would deliver the story pages. "S.O.P. (standard operating procedure) in those days," he said. "I would deliver the pages from the script and the editor would ask for me to do one or two unscripted pages. I didn't feel like running back home to the drawing table, so I would just sit at the desk and draw them with whatever was at hand." Alla prima. In the office. Astounding!

I'd invite you all to check out what I think is the best web site ever. **Tothfans.com**, put together by Jeff Rose, is so good that it has brought out contributions from Toth's pals like John Hitchcock (the owner of Parts Unknown in Greensboro). Alex has done lots of new work, contributed new editorials and insights (with his inimical 'doodle' illustrations), and started something that we all think is groundbreaking comics history—margin notes and commentary on his most famous stories for a section called "The Annotated Toth."

I'd love to see stories on Bob Oksner, the DC Jerry Lewis, Bob Hope, Dobie Gillis and Pat Boone comics (you ought to coax Kevin Nowlan into showing the reworkings/reprints of Dobie Gillis as Binky and "Windy and Willy" he's discovered). Bob's accessible (he was at this year's San Diego Con) and I think would be a great interview. All the best,

Dave Cook
Sterling, KS

### Big love for Little Books

I noticed that my subscription to *Comic Book Marketplace* is about to expire, so I would like to renew my subscription for another year.

I have been collecting Big Little Books on eBay lately. I really enjoy collecting them. It is funny how the art on these books varies quite a bit. Some are sublime and some are awful.

I was wondering if you might publish some information about the Big Little Books in *CBM*. I would like to find

out more information about Henry Vallely. I subscribe to the Big Little Book fan club and they don't seem to have much information available about him. I am looking forward to another year of *Comic Book Marketplace*. Sincerely,

Brian Gardner
Indianapolis IN

### The Amazing Expanded Michelle?

My favorite comic book historian, Michelle Nolan, is a major asset for *CBM*. She deserves some praise. I would love to see her doing an expanded column, or two columns each issue.

Ryan Osadchuk
Winnipeg, Canada

### Spectre specialists

*CBM* #94 was great! Just like *X-Men* #94, maybe this is the "rebirth" your magazine needed! All the excellent information on the Golden Age Green Lantern and the Spectre—wonderful! Having *More Fun* #52 and #53 I worried I was about the only Spectre expert left. Thanks!

Richard M. Brown
Detroit, MI

The best article in #94 was by far "The Avenger of Blood" by Rob Hughes on the Golden Age Spectre. *CBM* needs more articles like this.

Lately the magazine has gone away from being the magazine for Golden, Silver and Bronze Age comic fans and collectors. You need much less emphasis on modern comics, please. Also, I do like the articles by R.C. Harvey on classic comic strips, but I do not like articles on character statues, original art, Frazetta paintings (I like his

art—but not in this magazine), movies and other areas not directly related to classic comics.

I would like to see book reviews based on reprints of classic comics. As I am primarily interested in buying various editions of DC's Archive and Marvel's Masterworks series, I would like to see articles in *CBM* devoted to these books. I think these series are the most important books being done today concerning classic comics. I only wish we could get more (mostly defunct) series in deluxe hardcover reprint books like these (too bad Marvel would not do hardcover reprints of the Atlas horror and sci-fi comics).

I cold go on and on—but I wish you the best of luck on *CBM*.

Ken Leeper
Lewistown, PA

*Thanks for mentioning "The Avenger of Blood." This article was inadvertently left off of the survey form, but many of you wrote in to express your enjoyment of this article.*

*RC*

**Mixologist**

In answer to your survey request question. I haven't read all the issues but I have read #89 and #93.

Issue 93 took my breath away. The issue devoted to Flash Gordon and Alex Raymond specifically was outstanding. So good in fact it left me wanting more. Dave Winiewicz's article was illuminating, riveting, fascinating and worthy of a first chapter in a book I hope he will write and you will publish. Raymond Cuthbert's article was a close second. Interesting but not as eye opening as Dave's.

The Foster issue was also quite special. I guess you can see what I'm interested in. I'd love to see *CBM* or another publication write about the giants of comic art in a serious way.

I've never understood why Raymond has been so overlooked. He clearly influenced most of the Hearst artists and DC artists as well. You can clearly draw a line from Raymond to the present time.

So my survey answer is mix it up with the great one's or go it alone with the great one's in a publication of their own. Keep it up.

Ed Maslow
via e-mail

CBM *reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. Send communications to:* Comic Book Marketplace, *PO Box 469, West Plains, MO 65775, or email us at cbm@gemstonepub.com.*


COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT!

These issues are available...

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| #52 | Archie, All-Star, Schwartz Part III, Fox | $8 |
| #58 | Lost in Space, Weisinger, Basil Wolverton! | $10 |
| #60 | Planet Comics & Reed Crandall | $10 |
| #65 | Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane & more! | $10 |
| #66 | Women of the Spirit, Batman & Raven! | $8 |
| #72 | Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I | $8 |
| #73 | Warren Horror, Larry Lieber Part II | $8 |
| #74 | Gil Kane, Green Lantern, Gerber Sticker Set #2 | $15 |
| #76 | Rocky & Bullwinkle, Poe, Wolverton | $8 |
| #79 | Blue Beetle, Fred Guardineer, Capt. Action | $8 |
| #83 | Magnus, Saturn Girl, Plastic Man | $8 |
| #84 | Morrow, Ditko, Romita Sr., Brainiac | $8 |
| #85 | Eisner, Manning, Whitman Mystery Part I | $8 |
| #86 | Perez Part I, Bronze Age, Whitman Mystery Part II | $8 |
| #87 | George Evans, Detectives Inc. | $8 |
| #88 | Murphy Anderson, Rudolph | $8 |
| #89 | Hal Foster, Frank Cho, Perez Part II | $8 |
| #90 | Patriotic issue, Bob Lubbers, Perez Part III | $8 |
| #91 | Johnny Craig, Harry "A" Chesler | $8 |
| #92 | Joe Kubert, Eddie Stanky, Mary Worth | $8 |
| #93 | Alex Raymond, Flash Gordon, Gail Simone | $8 |
| #94 | GA Green Lantern, Spectre, Perez Wrap-up | $8 |
| #95 | Disney strip art, Miracleman | $8 |
| #96 | Milton Caniff, Marc Hempel | $8 |
| Sp #5 | Spider-Man, Gerber Sticker Set #8 | $12 |

Prices include postage.
Add $2 each for overseas orders.
MD (5%) and MO (6.975%) add sales tax.
MasterCard, Visa orders
call 800-322-7978.

CBM Back Issues
PO Box 469
West Plains MO
65775-0469

# Food for Comic-Book Thought

## Time-Line Facts You Might Not Have Realized

by Michelle Nolan

Here's a column a little different: a two-part exercise in mental stimulation. Those of you who don't enjoy facts and figures may want to skip to the next section, but you might miss out on something you never realized.

Are you ready? Let's have some timeline fun!

The first part deals in various "ages" of Golden Age and Atom Age comics, as you'll soon see, regarding the eras when various genres and types dominated. This list doesn't pretend to be comprehensive, but rather an overview of various seldom-realized periods in comics history.

The second part involves time lines and time spans. I think you'll enjoy this one. In fact, I'll bet thoughts of this type have often popped into your head, especially if you've been collecting since the prehistoric period the way so many of us have.

Remember, when we're talking about such-and-such an "Age of Comics," we aren't trying to cite the first and last issues of a given genre, but rather the primary period when this type of comic enjoyed the greatest popularity.

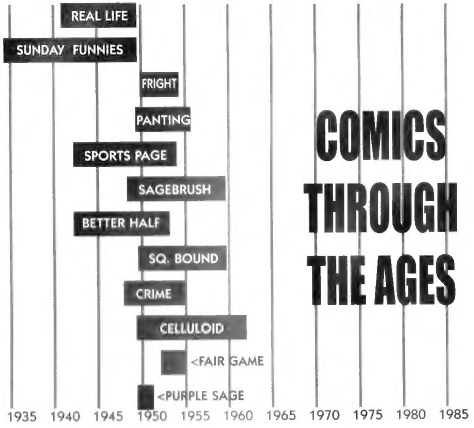
OK, let's go:

**The Real Life Age** (1941-49): This corresponds to the publication of *True Comics* #1 and the end of the newsstand run of *True*; the publication of *Real Life Comics* #1 in 1941; and to the end of DC's *Real Fact Comics* with #21 in 1949. There were more than a dozen "true" type comics, not counting the sports titles, and these are among the most underrated of all comics.

**The Sunday Funnies Age** (1934-49): This matches up with the publication of *Famous Funnies* #1 and finishes with the last issues of *Super Comics* and *Ace Comics* in 1949, following the demise of *Popular Comics* in 1948. *King Comics* lingered into the 1950s, but remember, we're stressing the peri-

#1 (Jul 1934)

#1 (Mar/Apr 1946)



#10 (#1) (Jun 1952)

#8 (Aug 1948)

od of greatest influence or popularity.

**The Frightful Age** (1950-54): In the minds of so many older Americans, comic books and horror are synonymous. Yet do you realize that the vast majority of horror comics appeared only within this five-year period?

**The Panting Age** (1949-56): Do you realize that there were at least 290 individual romance comics and at least 56 titles published every year over this eight-year period? As a genre, there were fewer than half as many horror and crime comics as there were romance comics.

**The Sports Page Age** (1942-54): This age corresponds with the beginning of regular publication of *True Sports Picture Stories*, through a variety of one-shots and short-run titles, and ends with the publication of Eastern's Willie Mays one-shot in 1954.

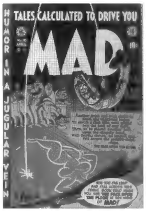
**The Sagebrush Age** (1948-60): This period begins in earnest with Dell's *Lone Ranger* #1 and *Roy Rogers* #1 and various Fawcett titles, continues through dozens and dozens of western heroes in the 1950s, and ends with Dell photo cover comics of various Western TV shows.

**The Better Half Age** (1942-53): This period includes female sidekicks, both married and unmarried to the primary good guys, including Hawkwoman, Bulletgirl, Mary Marvel, Namora, Golden Girl and Dollgirl.

**The Squarebound Age** (1949-60): There were earlier squarebounds, of course, but in my mind this period truly begins with *Christmas Parade* #1 and *Archie Annual* #1 in 1949 and includes the early *Dennis the Menace* annuals beginning in 1955. In my mind, *Superman Annual* #1 (1960) begins the Annual Age.

**The Crime Wave Age** (1948-55): Even though *Crime Does Not Pay* #22 introduced the "straight" crime genre in 1942, the crime comics age did not really begin until its companion magazine, *Crime and Punishment*, began in 1948. Both titles ended in 1955.

#nn (1951)

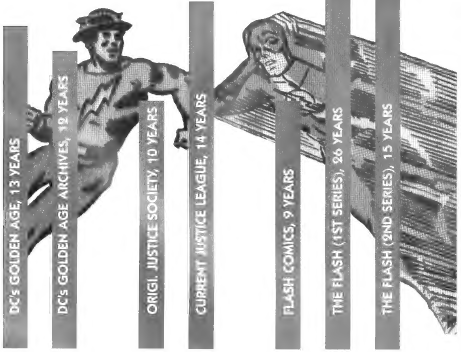



#1 (Oct/Nov 52)

**The Celluloid Age** (1949-62): This extended primarily from Fawcett's two movie adaptation titles through the run of *Dell Movie Classics*.

**The Fair Game Age** (1952-1955): This began with *MAD* comics and continued with more than a dozen imitators, most of which were long gone by the time *MAD* became a magazine in 1955. Twenty-five cents, cheap!

**The Writers of the Purple Sage Age** (1949-51): Romantic westerns flooded the


DC's GOLDEN AGE, 13 YEARS
DC's GOLDEN AGE ARCHIVES, 12 YEARS
ORIGIL JUSTICE SOCIETY, 10 YEARS
CURRENT JUSTICE LEAGUE, 14 YEARS
FLASH COMICS, 9 YEARS
THE FLASH (1ST SERIES), 26 YEARS
THE FLASH (2ND SERIES), 15 YEARS

market in 1949 and were mostly gone two years later.

Have we overlooked any of your favorite Ages? Let us know!

Now for the time-line topics. This is where we really can have some fun. This is sort of a "Did You Realize?" section, with the intention of providing historical perspective and showing just how long comic books have been with us. So let's begin:

#1 (Jan/Feb 1948), beginning an entire Age. By the time of the photo covers, like #114 (Mar/Apr 1962), the Age was over.

DC Comics has been publishing hardbound archives of classic Golden Age stories since 1990—almost as long as the original DC Golden Age lasted (slightly less than 13 years, from the introduction of Superman in 1938 to the last adventure of the original Justice Society in 1951).

Spider-Man, who may be a bigger comic book icon than Superman, is 40 years old. When Spider-Man was first introduced in 1962, Superman was 24 years old.

It has been 15 years and more than 180 issues since the third "version" of DC's *Flash Comics* was introduced in 1987. The Flash's first series lasted nine years (1940-49).

DC's second Wonder Woman title has run more than 180 issues since being introduced 15 years ago. It took the original run of *Wonder Woman* 27 years to reach 180 issues!

DC revived the original Fawcett version of Captain Marvel 29 years ago with *Shazam* #1 in 1973. When Shazam #1 appeared, the original Captain Marvel had not appeared for 19 years and the character was 33 years old.

DC's original Justice Society lasted only a little more than 10 years; the latest version of the Justice League has been published for 14 years.

DC first revived Plastic Man 36 years ago—25 years after the character originally appeared in *Police Comics* #1.

The Fantastic Four will be 41 years old this year. When *Fantastic Four* #1 appeared in 1961, the modern comic book industry was 27 years old.

Superman is 64 years old. When Superman was first published in 1938, people who were 64 years old had gone through grade school without telephones, electric power, movies, radio, autos or airplanes. And virtually none of them had ever said the word "super" as children.

Jules Feiffer published *The Great Comic Book Heroes* nearly 37 years ago—27 years after the beginning of the Golden Age with *Action Comics* #1!

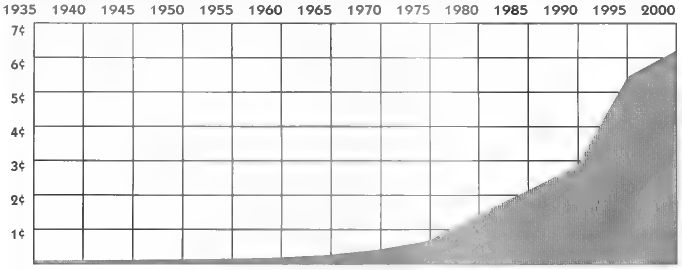
The first true comic conventions, held some 38 years ago, celebrated an industry that began only 30 years earlier. Ditto for fanzines (this pun is fully intended, but how many of you are old enough to get it?).

Comic books have endured nearly seven decades as a facet of pop culture. The heydays of dime novels and pulp magazines basically lasted less than half that long, largely in separate periods from the 1890s through the early 1950s.

*Superman Annual* #1 was published 42 years ago—22 years after the introduction of Superman.

YOUR COMIC DOLLAR AT WORK:

For a hypothetical National/DC title (say, **Advention Detection Comics**) started in 1935, and standardized for page count and price changes over the decades, you paid 0.15 cents per page in 1935 and 7 cents per page in 2002. This chart does not take into acount ad pages, or inflation!



The original run of Dell comics has been gone almost twice as long—40 years, since the original Dell ended its connection with Western Printing in 1962—as it existed.

Captain America was revived by Marvel in 1964—38 years ago—when the character was 23 years old and had not appeared for 10 years.

Fifty years ago, most comic books cost 10 cents and many were 52 pages. Today they are usually 36 pages (generally with more ads) and usually cost 20 to 30 times that much. The government's inflation index over the same 50-year period is about eight to nine times as much.

DC Comics revived The Flash in 1956—46 years ago. That's nearly three times as long ago as the age of the original Flash at the time of DC's revival—16 years.

Likewise, Green Lantern was revived in 1959—43 years ago. The original character had first appeared 19 years earlier.

Human beings have not walked on the moon in nearly 30 years—one year after the first appearance of Swamp Thing.

On the other hand, human beings first walked on the moon 33 years ago—31 years after the introduction of Superman. 35 years after the debut of Flash Gordon and 41 years after Buck Rogers first appeared in a novel in *Amazing Stories*.

Archie is 61 years old and Nancy Drew is 72—and both teen-age pop culture icons are still going strong. In fact, they are among the few characters with roots in the 1930s (Nancy Drew) and 1940s (Archie) that are still popular today.

Disneyland first opened 47 years ago—some 28 years after Mickey Mouse first appeared in a Disney cartoon.

How many publications of any type have been continuously running longer than the 60-plus years of Superman, Batman and Archie?

Bantam's Doc Savage paperback reprints began to appear

• Our incredible selection is updated daily
• Searchable database with shopping cart
• Secure credit card service and PayPal
• Managed by Ron Pussell, senior Price Guide consultant since 1980
• Always buying!
**(775) 831-4848**

**Your collectibles are priceless treasures that can't be replaced.**
**Treat them that way.**

As the long-standing leader in high-quality archival supplies, we at E. Gerber Products offer serious protection for the serious collector by creating the finest preservation and storage supply products on the market – affordable archival supplies that enable you to keep your collectibles pristine and resistant to the ravages of time.

We stock a full line of products to protect your collection. Our Archives and Mylites 2 bags are the finest in the industry built to last and designed from concept to manufacturing with one goal in mind: preserve your collectibles from the ravages of time and the environment.

**ARCHIVES**
Formerly "Snugs"™
• Made from 4 mil thick Mylar D®
• Dimensions are width x height plus two 7/8" flaps

| Price per: Item# | Size | Description | 50 | 200 | 1000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 550R | 5 x 5 1/2 | Compact Disc | $12.50 | $40.00 | $180.00 |
| 625P | 6 1/4 x 8 5/8 | Reader's Digest & Paperbacks | $19.00 | $62.00 | $270.00 |
| 700R | 7 x 10 1/2 | Current Comics- 1990's | $19.25 | $63.00 | $275.00 |
| 725R | 7 1/4 x 10 1/2 | Standard Comics - 1970's-90's | $19.50 | $64.00 | $282.00 |
| 775R | 7 3/4 x 10 1/2 | Silver/Golden Comics - 1950's-70's | $20.00 | $66.00 | $288.00 |
| 800R | 8 x 11 | Golden Age Comics - 1940's-50's | $21.25 | $70.00 | $306.00 |
| 825R | 8 1/4 x 11 | Super Golden Age Comics | $22.25 | $73.00 | $318.00 |
| 875R | 8 3/4 x 11 | Large Comics, Mag. & Letter | $24.25 | $79.00 | $348.00 |
| 900R | 9 x 12 | Standard Magazines | $25.50 | $87.00 | $420.00 |
| 914R | 9 x 14 1/2 | Large Size | $25.50 | $116.00 | $504.00 |
| 950R | 9 1/2 x 12 1/4 | Tabloid Size, Large Magazines | $31.25 | $106.00 | $468.00 |
| | | 3.5 1/4 Shipping & Handling* | $2.00 | $7.00 | $22.00 |

**Mylites2**
• Made from 2 mil thick Mylar D®
• Dimensions are width x height plus flap
• Flap can be folded over, tucked in or taped closed
• The 2 mil sleeves are twice the thickness and 4 times the protection of 1 mil thick bags

| Price per: Item# | Size | Description | 50 | 200 | 1000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 553M2 | 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 | Photograph, Negatives | $9.50 | $31.00 | $130.00 |
| 625M2 | 6 1/4 x 10 1/2 | Reader's Digest & Paperbacks | $19.50 | $36.00 | $150.00 |
| 700M2 | 7 x 10 3/4 | Current Comics- 1990's | $19.75 | $38.00 | $155.00 |
| 725M2 | 7 1/4 x 10 3/4 | Standard Comics - 1970's-90's | $11.00 | $37.00 | $160.00 |
| 775M2 | 7 3/4 x 10 3/4 | Silver/Gold Comics - 1950's-70's | $11.50 | $38.00 | $165.00 |
| 800M2 | 8 x 10 3/4 | Golden Age Comics - 1940's-50's | $12.00 | $39.00 | $170.00 |
| 825M2 | 8 1/4 x 10 3/4 | Super Golden Age Comics | $12.50 | $40.00 | $180.00 |
| 875M2 | 8 3/4 x 10 3/4 | Large Comics, Mag. & Letter | $13.75 | $43.00 | $185.00 |
| 900M2 | 9 x 12 | Standard Magazines | $16.25 | $53.00 | $231.00 |
| | | Add Shipping & Handling* | $1.00 | $4.00 | $11.00 |

For a complete list of our affordable archival products, please call us toll-free at
**1-800-79-MYLAR**
from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time,or mail your request to:
E. Gerber Products, LLC.
1720 Belmont Avenue, Suite C
Baltimore, MD 21244
Fax: 1-410-944-9363
e-mail: archival@egerber.com

**The Best Protection at the Best Price**
Satisfaction Guaranteed
All E. Gerber archival supply products carry our assurance of the highest quality standards in both material and manufacturing.
Visit us on the Web at www.egerber.com!

Top of the Line Preservation And Storage Supplies
E. Gerber PRODUCTS LLC
...At The Lowest Prices

© 2001 Diamond Comic Distributors, Inc. All rights reserved.

38 years ago when the first story was 31 years old

Sound in movies is only 11 years older than Superman, 12 years older than Batman and 14 years older than Captain America

The modern comic book is now nearly 70 years old. Seventy years before the regular series of *Famous Funnies* began in 1934, the Civil War still raged and the Emancipation Proclamation was considered one of the most radical ideas in history by a significant portion of the population of the United States.

#11 (Jun 1951)

#1 (Jun 1948)

Shortest-lived (and weirdest?) Age. #10 (second issue, Jan/Feb 1950).

Spawn is 10 years old—longer than the original Flash and Green Lantern features ran until they were cancelled (except for appearances for two more years in *All Star Comics*).

The last original movie serials were released 46 years ago in 1956. At that time, the first sound films were 29 years old.

#2 (Fall 1941)

*Amazing Stories*, the first true science fiction magazine, first appeared 76 years ago. That's one-third of the entire history of the United States.

Marvel's Captain Marvel series debuted 34 years ago in 1968—when the original (and far different) Captain Marvel was 28 years old.

*Seduction of the Innocent*, which first appeared in 1954, was the first book to deal entirely with the topic of comic books (there were a few earlier volumes devoted to comic strips with some mention of comic books). *The Great Comic Book Heroes* appeared 11 years later. Since then, there have been more than 500 books devoted to the topic, including reprint volumes.

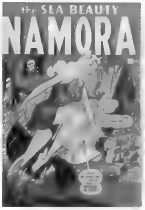
Marvel's X-Men characters are 39 years old since their earliest incarnation. The first super team—the original Justice Society of America—lasted only 11 years (1940-51).

In 1969, when humans first walked on the moon—66 years after the Wright Brothers made the first machine-powered flight—who would have guessed that in 2002 humans still would not be close to serious plans for a manned flight to Mars? To put it another way, if humans don't reach Mars by 2038, a full century will have passed since Flash Gordon, Dr. Zarkov and Dale Arden got there in serials!

On a related note, the Star Wars characters are now 25 years old. That means fans who enjoyed the original film trilogy in 1977-83 now need to be about 40 years old to have any meaningful memories of the last manned mission to the moon (1972).

Finally, the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* and the San Diego Comic Convention are both 32 years old. When the *Guide* first appeared in 1970 and the convention was first held that same year, Action #1 was exactly 32 years old!

Do you have any fascinating timeline tidbits? If so, let us know about them! In the meantime, remember the sign my seventh-grade home room teacher posted over the clock: "Time passes; you may not!"

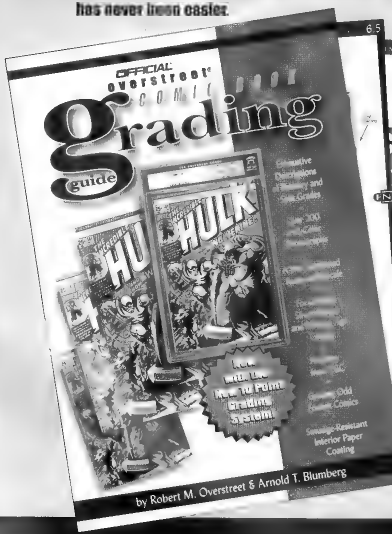


#1 (Fall 1948)

**Archie Annual #2** (1951), solidly in the Squarebound Age. **Superman Annual** or **80 Page Giant** #1 (Oct 1961), either way it's outside the Squarebound Age.

# $24 GETS YOU THE COMPETITOR'S EDGE

***Start with the convenient thumb-tabs on the edge of the Guide, read the descriptions of*** **the grades and the 10-Point Grading Scale, and soon you too will be making the grade! With the new *Official Overstreet Comic Book Grading Guide*, grading your comic books has never been easier.**




**Also featured in this full-color volume:**

- **Exhaustive Descriptions of Primary and Split Grades**
- **Full-Color Photos of Every Major Defect**
- **A New Suggested Restoration Scale**
- **For Golden, Silver, Bronze and Modern Age Comics**
- **An Essay from CGC**
- **Foreword by Chuck Rozanski**
- **And more!**

***AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL COMIC SHOP THIS DECEMBER!***

**THE OFFICIAL OVERSTREET COMIC BOOK GRADING GUIDE - THE BOOK THAT GIVES YOU THE EDGE!**

# Setting the Fashion with the Patterson Girl

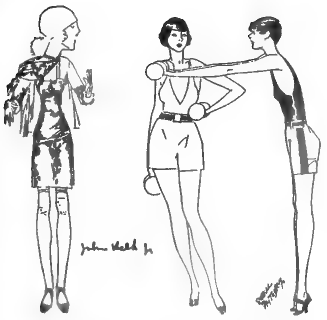
© 2002 R.C. Harvey

We're tempted to think, those of us who ponder such matters at all, that John Held, Jr. personified the Roaring Twenties. More than any other cartoonist in the popular memory, Held captured in his unique graphic abstractions the fashions and fads of the collegiate jazz age. His leggy flappers with noses in the air and hose rolled at the knee and his bell-bottomed sheiks with their hair plastered tight to cue ball heads personified the Younger Generation to a nation of readers. His comic figures, shorthand caricatures in geometric shapes with large heads and spindly bodies, were rendered in delicate, fragile lines against which Held contrasted artfully spotted stark blacks with striking liberality. Sophisticated and vaguely dissolute, his short-skirted cuties were insatiable neckers, and their tuxedo-clad escorts inveterate social bootleggers, a flask on every hip. Held's work appeared most regularly in *Life*, *Judge*, *Liberty* and the decade's newest national magazine—one that appealed to all ages with its frolicsome portraits of alleged campus life—*College Humor*.

Alas, Held, identifying intimately with the frivolity of the twenties, didn't make the transition to the depression times that followed in the next decade, and his cartoons disappeared from the national scene. He called it a career, took up painting, became an excellent watercolorist, and taught art at a university for the rest of his life. We'll undoubtedly take a longer look at Held in some future installment of this opus, but this time, I want to divert your attention to the other cartoonist whose work did as much to define the Roaring Twenties as Held's—Russell Patterson. It was Patterson who clothed flappers in raccoon coats and unfastened galoshes, setting a fashion for the age. We don't think of Patterson and Held as contemporaries let alone co-contrivers of the imagery of the age, but that may be because Patterson went on, beyond the twenties and that decade's storied roar and into the staid thirties, the war-torn forties, and even into the long summer afternoon of the fifties. And since he outlasted the twenties, we don't identify him with that decade as closely as we do Held.

Technically, the work of the two cartoonists had a surface similarity: Patterson, too, contrasted chunky solid blacks against a fine crisp penline. But Patterson's line was sketchier than Held's, and its wispy looseness lent his pictures an airy, breezy informality in comparison to Held's studied geometry. And Patterson's almond-eyed girls were gorgeous. Patterson was a painter as well as a cartoonist, and his girls were realistically illustrated rather than expressionistically caricatured visions of femininity (if idealism can ever be rendered realistic). Held's girls were comedic emblems, Patterson's statuesque illustrations. Held's girls were jazz age improvisations, Patterson's symphonic orchestrations. Held's flappers were all legs and knobby

Patterson's self-portrait. Note the background details.



One of John Held, Jr.'s skinny flappers on the left; two of Patterson's somewhat more zaftig ladies on the right.

knees, Patterson's long-stemmed and sveltely curvaceous with torsos that were architectural triumphs. That Patterson's drawings of women were imbued with structural understanding is not surprising: he had begun his artistic career by studying architecture briefly at McGill University in Montreal.

Patterson had never been serious about architecture, not the kind that results in buildings at any rate. Born in Omaha, Nebraska, on December 26, 1893, he had, by the time college beckoned, formed the idea of becoming a magazine cover artist. At the time, the family was living in Montreal, to which his father, a railway lawyer, had followed the Canadian Pacific, and Patterson *pere*, hoping his son and heir would become an engineer, had aimed his scion at McGill. But young Patterson had seen a particularly seductive *Collier*'s cover by Joseph Leyendecker and decided, "then and there," as he later said, to be a cover artist.

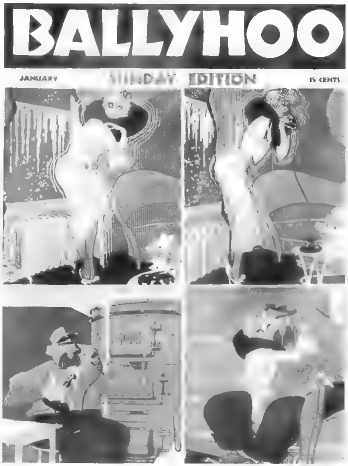
When he announced this decision to his father, "all hell broke loose," Patterson wrote. "He got red in the face, pointed at me and shouted, 'Not with me you won't. If you want to be one of those fellows with smocks, a tam, baggy pants and a big bow tie, get out! Go to Paris and live in an attic but not on my money!'"

Ultimately, they compromised. Patterson would go to McGill, and his father agreed to let him study architecture. It was the closest thing to Art that young Patterson could find that his father would consent to. But Patterson's artistic training was mostly catch-as-catch can.

He didn't finish his studies at McGill; when the family business, a hotel, was burned to the ground, Patterson left college to get a job and contribute to the family coffers. He worked at the *Montreal Star*, taking want ads over the counter and, in his spare hours, copying the pictures that George McManus and Harrison Fisher made. About a year later, he found a job as a sports cartoonist at the *Montreal Weekly Standard*, but, after appearing in only a single edition, he was fired because his drawings were larger than the editor wanted. Next, he landed at the city's French paper, *La Patrie*, where he lasted a year and drew his first comic strip, *Pierrette et Pierrot*.

On about 1913 or 1914 (he couldn't recall exactly), Patterson left Canada for Chicago, where he did a variety of commercial jobs, including drawing interiors for furniture ads in newspapers and magazines. His architectural career had equipped him to draw furniture but not people. Whenever a furniture ad required human props, "they'd have someone else put in the figures," Patterson ruefully reported. Quickly tiring of this affront, he enrolled in the Art Institute of Chicago, attending for five terms at intervals between 1916 and 1919. He opened his own studio about 1916, and somewhere along the way, he joined the Royal

Patterson's svelte beauties were often posed statuesquely against the solid blacks of the attire of admiring males.




One of Patterson's watercolor covers for **Ballyhoo**. See more examples in the color section.

Canadian Air Force to fight in World War I. He learned to fly but saw no combat: once his artistic ability was discovered, he was put to work drawing training aids and other materials for the service. He married his first wife, Constance Burke, in 1918.

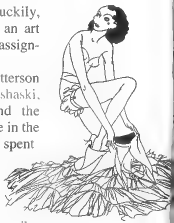
Patterson was still not permitted to draw people in the ads he was doing, and he was getting "sick and tired" of having his pictures populated by someone else. In 1920 he had a good year and thought he had enough money saved to finance six weeks in France to learn to draw the figure. Once in Paris, he found himself stranded. He had neglected to guarantee his return passage, and when the time came for him to embark for the U.S., he discovered he'd have to wait for two months.

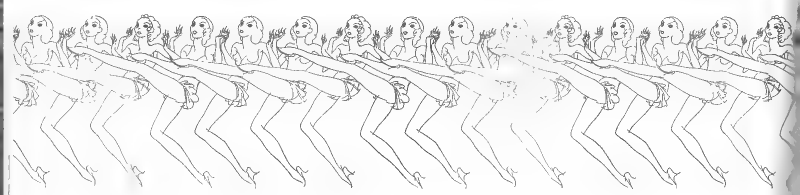
"There was nothing else to do but use a little of my return money daily in order to survive," he said.

His survival maneuver consumed his return fare, and he wound up spending the next year in France, moving around a lot, from one artist friend's studio to another's, sometimes living for a few weeks at a time in an apartment whose usual occupant was temporarily out-of-town. Luckily, Patterson had a brother who was an art agent in Chicago and who found assignments for him occasionally.

During that bohemian year, Patterson hobnobbed with such artists as Warshaski, Paul Signac, Gilbert White, and the Pissaro brothers. He lived for a time in the apartment of Pierre Bonnard. He spent the summer in a little hotel in Petite Andle, a small town on the Seine, two hours from Paris. Claude Monet lived just down the road. "I painted and they all helped me," Patterson said. The following winter, he earned his way by drawing castle interiors for a Chicago furniture company, a client his brother Tom had hustled for him back home. And he went to life drawing classes.

"Paris is cold from November to May, so whenever I had a franc, I went to the only place I knew where I could get warm—a life class," Patterson wrote years later. "My favorite was close by in the Latin Quarter. It was built like a very small theater in the round. The model's platform was in the middle of the room with a pot-bellied stove on it plus a chair. There was no dressing room so the model stripped and dressed in full view. These girls were beautiful and usually made a big thing of the strip. When special models were





RUSSELL PATTERSON
Makes a $150 Drawing in a Few Hours!
—and now teaches you his original methods in a series of 20 snappy lessons—brimful with sparkling interest from the very start—a departure from the purely conventional. This training constitutes the last word in Humorous Illustration, teaching a New Art for a New Age—a pleasant relief from the old style, standardized instruction. Learn to draw the dashing, peppy types that are all the rage as exemplified by Mr. Patterson's numerous contributions to magazines. Let him teach you his clever technique. What profession could compare with this in its irresistible appeal or sheer earning power? Write now for full information.
Russell Patterson School of Humorous Illustration
Michigan Ave. at 20th St., Dept. 5
CHICAGO - - - ILLINOIS

One of the "free" ads for Patterson's correspondence course.

there, you had to make it early to get a seat.

"The favorite was a beautiful brunette. She liked ribbons and so did the men. Her bra was tied with a ribbon in the back, her lace panties were tied on the sides. A lace band around her waist had long ribbons. These she put through loops she had on her stockings. She took her time dressing and undressing and responded shyly to the applause. From two in the afternoon until six, the girls went from one-minute poses to fifteen minutes. I learned to draw the figure."

When Patterson returned to Chicago, he continued for a while drawing interiors for furniture companies, and he sold paintings. But he was mildly discontented, haunted by the recollection of the pleasant days spent drawing nudes in Paris. At last, inspired by the flappers he saw all around him, he began putting fetching versions of them into his interiors. He remembered seeing Canadian girls in raccoon coats and open galoshes, and he dressed his American ladies likewise. He soon lost his furniture accounts, but other clients found him. Pete Martin, editor of the a-borning *College Humor* magazine, came calling; the "Patterson Girl" was a fixture in the magazine almost from its beginning in 1922. And the Flaming Youth of the Jazz Age started wearing raccoon coats and unfastened overshoes. Sadly, little of Patterson's original art of this period exists: he destroyed most of it because it took up too much space in his studio.

The exposure in *College Humor* brought the Patterson Girl to the attention of Bill Ziff, publisher of *Ziff's* magazine, who made a proposal to the artist that would yield one of the more intriguing tidbits of the Patterson legend. Ziff wanted to publish Patterson drawings but instead of paying for them, he offered advertising space. To take advantage of the free advertising, Patterson's brother suggested that they start a correspondence course, and "Russell Patterson's School of Humorous Illustration" was founded forthwith. Patterson conjured up 20 lessons, and was soon swamped with students. One of them was a Kansas City resident named Walt Disney. Years later, according to Patterson, he met Disney, now a world-famous name in animation, and Disney stunned him by saying, "Patterson—you bastard! You got me into all this!"

The correspondence school soon proved overwhelming in its demands for time and money (postage alone was beyond the primitive budget Patterson and his brother had devised), so Patterson was happy to accept an offer from King Features to come to New York and work for the Hearst newspaper there.

A week before Christmas in 1925, Patterson arrived in the Big Apple, and the big time wasn't far behind. Shortly after the first of the year, he was drawing his girls in color to adorn ads for Rolls Royce and Buick and

*[continued on page 64]*

Patterson worked in wash for Ballyhoo interior drawings.

SUPERMAN
Created by JERRY SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER
VANGUARD'S NEWEST
BY EDWARD ZENO
"MY NAME'S CURT SWAN. I'M AN ARTIST...
"... AND WHEN MY TEACHERS TOLD ME YEARS AGO THAT I SHOULD LIVE THROUGH MY ART I NEVER KNEW THAT SOMEDAY I WOULD BE ABLE TO SAY...
I FLEW WITH SUPERMAN!

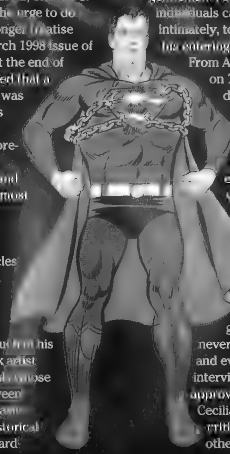
# CURT SWAN:
## A LIFE IN COMICS

Compiling the book *Curt Swan: A Life In Comics*, was the result of twenty years' germination, deliberation and determination. In the early 1980s I submitted an article to *Comics Buyer's Guide* newspaper about Swan, which was rejected because it was too personal and did not have enough general interest. Upon returning to graduate school and learning to write more objectively, a completely revised version finally saw print in the December 22, 1989 *CBG*. That success was followed by the urge to do something more elaborate. A longer treatise about Curt appeared in the March 1998 issue of *Comic Book Marketplace* #57. At the end of that article I half-jokingly quipped that a complete book about the artist was being written. Naiveté was this author's best friend: after full immersion in a project so comprehensive, the number of hours required beyond normal work and family commitments seemed almost daunting at times.

Besides the amount of time required to complete *A Life In Comics*, there were other obstacles encountered prior to its release. One potential stumbling block was that Curt Swan drew one signature character for a single comics publisher throughout much of his career. Other recent comic book artist biographies dealt with individuals whose output was more balanced between different companies, making it easier legally to picture their art for historical purposes. Largely due to Vanguard Publisher J. David Spurlock's efforts, DC granted permission to allow a plethora of Superman art and other examples that Curt drew for them over a half-century to be pictured.

Another problem was that Swan didn't particularly like to talk about his work. For this reason, some of the people who participated in *A Life In Comics* expressed surprise that there would be enough material to write about this unassuming gentleman. Fortunately, a broad sampling of individuals came forward, some who knew him intimately, to discuss his life from a time prior to his entering the comics field to his final years. From Andy Rooney, who worked with Swan on *The Stars and Stripes* army newspaper during the Second World War and never knew he drew Superman, to Tom Mason, who wrote a story which Curt penciled for Marvel Comics in the 1990s, people analyzed events upon which Swan didn't dwell when he was alive. The hundred-page interview chapter became the book's linchpin. And thanks to contributor Raul Wrona, there were a series of previously unpublished conversations with Curt himself.

A fourth potential obstacle, gaining the Swan family's support, never materialized. Curt's three children and even his ex-wife participated in the interviews. The catalyst for receiving their approval was Curt's youngest daughter, Cecilia. She never hesitated to send critically needed photos or to contact other family members on my behalf.

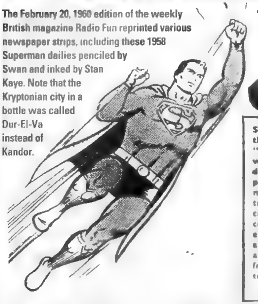


All images © DC Comics, Inc.

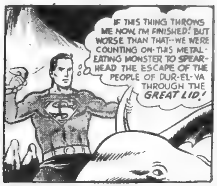
A NEW PERIL THREATENS THE KRYPTONIANS WITH EXTINCTION!

# SUPERMAN

The February 20, 1960 edition of the weekly British magazine Radio Fun reprinted various newspaper strips, including these 1958 Superman dailies penciled by Swan and inked by Stan Kaye. Note that the Kryptonian city in a bottle was called Dur-El-Va instead of Kandor.



**Superman fell into the hands of Romede, "master of the universe," and was reduced in size and put in a jar which microscopically contained a Kryptonian city. Superman decided to use a metal-eating beast, called an oxidizer, to escape, and, watched by his friend, Kai Mara, he tried to tame the creature**

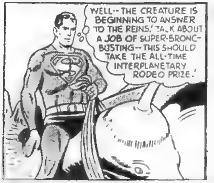

IF THIS THING THROWS ME NOW, I'M FINISHED! BUT WORSE THAN THAT—WE WERE COUNTING ON THIS METAL-EATING MONSTER TO SPEAR-HEAD THE ESCAPE OF THE PEOPLE OF DUR-EL-VA THROUGH THE GREAT LID!

GREAT SCOTT! IT'S HEADED FOR THAT METAL GAS STORAGE TANK! IF IT STARTS TO EAT THAT, THE COMPRESSED GAS CAN SPREAD UNTIL A SPARK WILL BE ENOUGH TO BLOW UP THE WHOLE JAR CONTAINING DUR-EL-VA!

THE WATCHERS BELOW SOON SAW SUPERMAN'S NEW PERIL . . .
HE WILL BE OVERCOME BY ESCAPING GAS IF THE OXIDIZER SHOULD EAT THROUGH THE METAL TANK!

MIGHT DO BETTER USING MY CAPE AS A BIT AND BRIDLE TO TURN THE CREATURE AROUND! (PUFF!) IT SEEMS TO BE WORKING A LITTLE... BUT... (PUFF!)—NOT ENOUGH...

KAI MARA CALLING ALL AIR PATROLS! THE SON OF JOR-EL IS GETTING THE OXIDIZER UNDER CONTROL! TURN BACK BEFORE THE ANIMAL PANICS AGAIN!


WELL—THE CREATURE IS BEGINNING TO ANSWER TO THE REINS! I'LL OKAY ABOUT A JOB OF SUPER-BRONC-BUSTING—THIS SHOULD TAKE THE ALL-TIME INTERPLANETARY RODEO PRIZE...

LOOK! JOR-EL'S SON IS READY TO GUIDE THE FLYING OXIDIZER THROUGH THE GREAT LID! HE'S DONE SO MUCH ALREADY—YET NOW I MUST SEND HIM TO FACE MORE UNKNOWN HAZARDS!

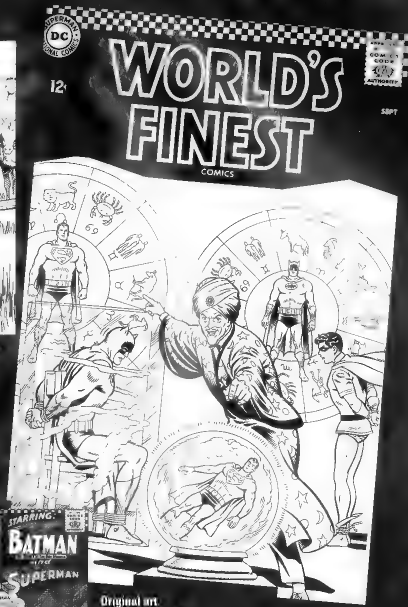
Since the book was completed, another unpublished Yellow Hair daily appeared for sale to the marketplace.

undoubtedly Cecilia had to tell them that this was a legitimate undertaking. We've discussed the understanding of being introduced into each other's lives so that a book about her father could be completed.

## SEARCHING FOR RARE SWAN ART

There's a bit of the curator in many collectors. *A Life In Comics* became a museum exhibition of rarely seen and unpublished Swan drawings obtained over a two-decade period (often in the form of photocopies) for the purpose of educating others about his work. Since the book's completion, more Swan illustrations have been found. A fifth *Yellow Hair* daily strip recently surfaced on eBay. (*Yellow Hair* was Swan's failed attempt at syndicating his own newspaper cartoon about a Caucasian boy raised by Native Americans. Four tryout strips are reprinted in the book.) Product art for a Superman Magic Slate (which was sold on eBay, penciled by Swan and inked by Wayne Mitchell around the late '70s. A 1980 San Diego Comicon program was obtained, wherein Curt penciled himself posing wise with a "not-so-punny" Man of Steel. Apparently, there is no dearth of uncommon artwork to be found by this prolific artist.

Original art intended to be the cover to World's Finest #160 (Sep 1966) became the splash page instead. (Shown next to published cover.)




The original Superman newspaper strip ran from 1939 until 1966. Only a few examples had ever been reprinted until the lovely books picturing the first dailies and Sundays (1939-1942 and 1939-1943, respectively) were published by Kitchen Sink Press and DC Comics. Curt Swan had mentioned penciling the dailies much later, beginning toward the end of the 1950s, but he could not recall exactly when or for how long he drew them. After trying to solve the mystery of whether his stint deserved more than a footnote in the book, a thorough search revealed that it was much more difficult to locate dailies from the '50s and '60s than from the '40s. Eventually, photocopies of some Swan dailies were obtained, a few taken directly

Curt told his friend Raul Wrona that he would occasionally go for a George Reeves look with his drawings. The television show featuring the actor who played Superman/Clark Kent was well established by the time this newspaper strip panel appeared in 1958.

from original art in private collectors' hands. Roy Thomas kindly mailed proof sheet copies of a complete story about Bizarro Superman sent to him in the 1960s by Otto Binder. (Interestingly, though Binder wrote the first Bizarro story for the comic books, the newspaper version was scripted by Alvin Schwartz.)

A fellow Swan fan who lives in London, England, Jim Kealy, found a couple of issues of a weekly British magazine called *Radio Fun*. *Radio Fun* reprinted various strips including previously syndicated Swan dailies, approximately four per week. One sequence provided an intriguing look at a story wherein Superman visits a miniaturized city in a bottle named Dur-El-Va, instead of Kandor as it was called in the comic books. Swan indexer and interviewer Raul Wrona located a collector in North Carolina who had several complete tales beginning toward the end of Swan's tenure. Curt's last story sequence concluded on November 12, 1960. On November 13 of that year, Wayne Boring, who was already illustrating the Sunday Supermans and had worked on the dailies years before, resumed those duties. Now the only question remaining was: when did Curt's newspaper work begin?

I had never seen a Swan daily from before 1957 until Raul Wrona traveled to the main reference library in Toronto. He found a couple of major Canadian papers that carried the *Superman* Sundays but not the dailies. A further search through the library archives revealed that a newspaper from the small mining town of Sudbury in northern Ontario contained the dailies from the approximate year. Microfilm of the *Sudbury Star* showed that Curt's run extended back all the way to June 18, 1956, prior to that, Win Mortimer was the daily artist. Swan's initial story dealt with Clark Kent's temporary adoption of a Korean War orphan. Curt once stated that he occasionally tried to capture George Reeves' (the actor who portrayed Superman in the 1950s television show) likeness in his art, a fact that was evident in some of those early cartoons.

Learning that Swan worked on *The Stars and Stripes* newspaper during World War II, it became crucial to find examples that would show what the artist was doing prior to coming to DC in late 1944. When it was discovered that Curt's family had none of this early work, Jim Kealy offered to search the British Newspaper Library on the outskirts of London, which holds that country's national archive collection of British and overseas newspapers, including copies of the European *Stars and Stripes*. Curt had been stationed in London, where the European edition originated during the middle part of the war, but Jim could find no Swan cartoons. Fortunately, Mort Walker mentioned that Curt had donated a scrapbook of his *Stars and Stripes* panels to the International Museum of Cartoon Art over a quarter-century earlier. It took the museum's curator, who had no prior knowledge of its existence, several months to locate the aged scrapbook. The next step was to find who owned the copyright and have them write the museum for permission to reprint the material. It was determined that *The Stars and Stripes* Archive did not retain ownership of the

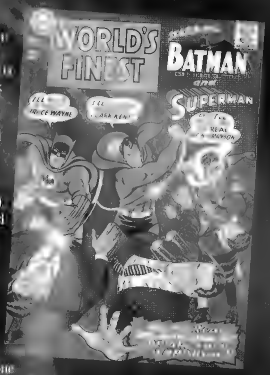
cartoons they belonged to the Swan estate and Curt's son Chris was the executor. After his attorney Greg interceded on my behalf, Chris generously authorized the museum to allow the art to be reproduced. Though the process took almost a year, the success of finding such rare Swan art and negotiating its release was further evidence that no obstacle would prevent the book's completion. Of course, there was neither an art director or publisher at that point, only a sense that the appropriate people would come forth at the right times to fill those roles.

## THE TEAM COMES TOGETHER

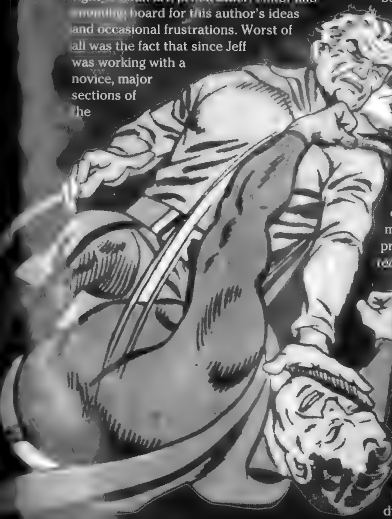
Jeff Weigel occasionally felt overwhelmed when he volunteered to design the book in 1995. Little did he know that in addition to using his graphic skills, he would serve as a proofreader, caption writer, compiler in his own right of Swan art, promoter, editor, and sounding board for this author's ideas and occasional frustrations. Worst of all was the fact that since Jeff was working with a novice, major sections of the book had to be reformatted several times. Because Weigel himself is a published comic book artist, his insights into how Swan's comic art could best be displayed were invaluable. A final testament to Jeff is that the final product is better than I envisioned. It contains his heart and soul as much as mine.

Self-publishing was not an affordable option and a retrospective about Curt's career deserved a wider distribution than that would entail. After seeing the beautifully done book, *The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino*, Vanguard was an excellent choice to publish a Swan biography. J. David Spurlock at Vanguard, initially skeptical for reasons mentioned in the second paragraph, soon realized that the project had a chance of seeing fruition. His vision has enabled him to produce an important line of sketchbooks and biographies which have elevated the art form of comics and immortalized many of the creators. In addition, David's editorial and creative suggestions were crucial in making *Curt Swan: A Life In Comics* a more professional package. For example, he realized the importance of picturing one of Andy Warhol's Superman prints side-by-side with the Swan drawing on which it was based to acknowledge the debt that the pop-artist owed the comic book penciller.

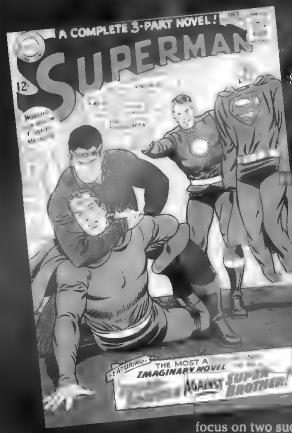
The writer/designer of the color section in the Infantino book, Arlen Schumer, agreed to put together a similar color section of Curt's work (you may remember Arlen's "Art History of Superman" from *CBM* #63, October 1998), and I was amazed at how simpatico we were about one important phase of Curt's career. For many of us raised during the Silver Age of Comics, Curt's




World's Finest 168, "The Return of the Composite Superman," as illustrated by Swan and inker George Klein.



Vintage Curt Swan action as Superman battles Krakik in World's Finest 173, "The Jekyll-Hyde Heroes."




Cover to issue 200 of *Superman*, pencils by Curt Swan and inks by George Klein.

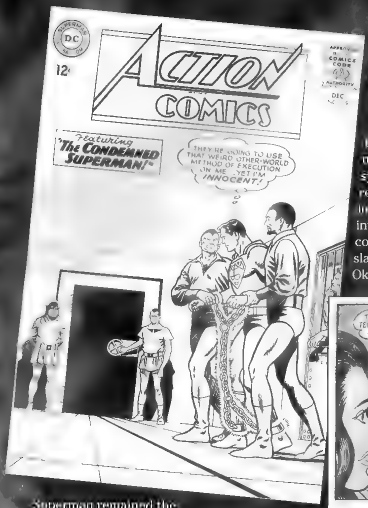
Superman and supporting cast became our extended family. Arlen was inspired when he emphasized that period with two double-page spreads titled, respectively, "Moods" and "Emotions." No comic artist in the history of the medium deserves more than Curt Swan to have representative images pictured within. I'll focus on two such intertwined but subtly different subjects.

## SILVER TO BRONZE

Researchers say that feelings associated with smells are among the strongest. While a kid, the pleasant odor of fresh tar was in the air early each August as it was sprayed from a truck followed by the spreading of fine-ground gravel on the streets around my home. This bittersweet event meant two things: that school would resume in only a month and that the October-dated comic books were on the stands. As we crossed newly paved roads with rocks sticking to the bottom of our tennis shoes, my brother and I walked to the nearest grocery and drug stores (one never knew which issues might bypass which location). We bought comics which included *Superman* #s 164 and 172, long stories in each, great two-part and three-part novels that contained terrific Swan art.

It was enlivening to write the chapter dealing with Swan's Silver Age output that included tales such as these. The heroism demonstrated by The Man Of Steel and his friends during that period had a profound impact on the moral code I still hold dear. Talking to other longtime fans, this is true for them also. Thoughts flowed easily while examining ways in which Curt's artistic contributions elevated many tales from that era to the level of epic. However, when it became time to discuss the Bronze Age, beginning not long after Swan embellisher George Klein left DC in 1975, I was worried. Though Murphy Anderson's gorgeous inks would soon grace Curt's pencils, the stories no longer held the same majesty. I'd even quit collecting comics around that time; they, and I, were growing up. There was a shade less idealism, a sliver more cynicism. So how could those years be revisited with authenticity? By realizing why the new writers changed the tone of the stories—because some loss of innocence is a good thing in dealing with the actual world.

◆ This character model sheet by Swan shows the many moods of Superman.


DC
12¢
ACTION COMICS
featuring "The Condemned Superman!"
THEY'RE GOING TO USE THAT WEIRD OTHER-WORLD METHOD OF EXECUTION ON HIM... YET I'M INNOCENT!

learned that attaching a microphone jack to a telephone hand piece with the dial on it dampens the volume on the other end. The digital dial should be located on a phone's base in order to record correctly.

There is another example of my technical acumen. After linking the nearest plug-in phone to the stereo system's cassette recorder, in a separate room, I had to sit perfectly still on a four-inch high stool while conducting the interviews. That was the [illegible] where the cords and jacks intersected. There was no slack. Once, while breathing deeply, Bob Oksner was immediately disconnected.

Superman remained the noblest hero of all; he was simply placed in more realistic situations. When Julius Schwartz became editor of the Superman books after Mort Weisinger left, the best thing he did was to retain Curt as penciler. Swan served as a bridge between the old direction and the new, between writers like Binder, Hamilton, Dorfman and Siegel and the next generation which included Bob O'Neil, Maggin, Wein, Conway, Pasko and others.

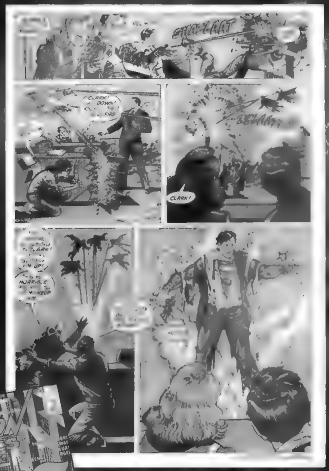
## WORLD'S WORST INTERVIEWER

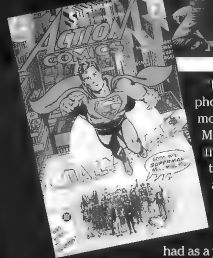
As the self-proclaimed "world's worst interviewer," thankfully, the people who participated in the book were intuitive enough to supply additional information when questions were found wanting. And when it came to phone interviews, the conversations were never recorded in a way so that they could be easily transcribed. While replaying the tapes, invariably my voice was deafeningly loud while the respondents could barely be heard. My hearing may never be the same! Later it was

**Original art for the cover of Action Comics #319, pencils by Swan, inks by George Klein**

**The Sand Creature relates his origin to I-Ching and Diana Prince from Superman #241, "The Shape of Fear." Drawn by Curt Swan and inked by Murphy Anderson.**

TELL US YOUR STORY—
ORIGINALLY, THE CREATURE — THE MASSIVE CHAIN-REACTION DESTROYED ALL KRYPTONITE ON EARTH!
KA-VOOMP
AS NARRATED IN SUPERMAN #233, JANUARY, 1971
...THE SAME EXPLOSION WHICH MOMENTARILY CREWED A RIFT BETWEEN THIS UNIVERSE AND THE REALM OF QUARRM, FROM THAT RIFT AN INVISIBLE MIST ESCAPED, PASSED OVER SUPERMAN'S UNCONSCIOUS BODY...
...AND SANK INTO THE DESERT SAND, THERE, TO REMAIN, CHARGED WITH SUPERMAN'S MENTAL AND PHYSICAL VIBRATIONS...
SLOWLY, GRADUALLY, THE BITS OF SAND BENEATH IT CHANGED— TOOK ON FORM... BECAME ALIVE!
A PSYCHIC LINK HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED! THUS EVERY TIME THE BEING FROM [illegible] IS [illegible] THERE WAS AN EXCHANGE OF POWERS! SOMETIMES, EVEN FROM A DISTANCE, INDIVIDUAL POWERS WERE MOMENTARILY SAPPED...





Clark Kent's secret identity is revealed to the world in the Alan Moore classic "Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow" from Superman #423. Penciled by Curt Swan, inked by George Perez. Cover of Moore's concluding chapter, Action Comics #583, art by Swan and Anderson.

The pain involved with transcribing phone interviews was more than offset by moments of elation. After phoning Alan Moore in England at a pre-arranged time, he stated that he'd just walked in the door and needed "five minutes for a spot of tea." Upon calling back, it was obvious that Mr. Moore had gotten into the proper frame of mind. At one point he mentioned the feeling he had as a young boy sitting in front of the hearth while immersed in Superman's Swan-illustrated exploits. The image that Alan the adult projected the day we spoke was of him sitting in a comfortable old chair on a chilly day, huddled with his warm teacup, allowing that long ago sense of childhood contentment to envelop him as it returned from forty years past. Hopefully, the reader is able to intuit those same feelings from the storyteller's words.

The discerning reader will catch a few small inconsistencies in the book. Though Swan stated that Alan Moore's script for the "last" Superman story (appearing in *Action* #523 and *Superman* #423, Sep 1986) was too wordy for him to easily follow, aren't we glad that he was up to the task of illustrating it? He might have wanted things a bit easier by the time he was in his mid-sixties but Curt produced great art for what became a landmark tale in the Superman canon. Another example is that Swan's son Chris talks of his dad being driven a bit crazy when the Superman supporting cast veered off into the fantastic, as with Jimmy Olsen becoming Elastic Lad, or when different characters such as Mxyzptlk or Bizarro appeared. But inker Dave Hunt tells how he was let in on the joke as Julie Schwartz, Curt and Cary concocted another amazingly "out-there" Bizarro tale, enjoyed by all, including the veteran penciler. It's good that discrepancies such as these were recorded. They point out that our perceptions of others' likes and dislikes are not always accurate, or in this case, maybe it's just that at two different points in time Curt's feelings changed. Chris was remembering how his father felt during the 1960s while Dave Hunt worked with an older Swan some two decades later.

A big mistake was narrowly averted late in the book's creative phase. Mark Waid had previously written that the Swan/Klein art team was his all-time favorite, but it was only after seeing him bid unsuccessfully on eBay for Swan original art that I thought to contact him. As Mark grudgingly admits, there may be those who think as highly of Curt and his comic output, but none that admire the artist more. Besides elsewhere in *A Life In Comics* about what George Klein brought to Swan's pencils, Waid's essay on how Curt the penciler inspired his own career as a comic book writer is priceless.

Mark's love of one of the most knowledgeable comics historians is also observed. Though we never finished discussing whether Al Plastino drew the characters' faces on two famous Curt Swan (with Stan Kaye inks) covers, *Action* #252 and *Adventure* #247 contain respectively, the first appearances of Supergirl and The Legion of Super-Heroes. Plastino was the interior artist and if you look carefully, the faces on the covers appear to match his work. (I also think Plastino illustrated Superman's face on one or two later Swan *Action Comics* covers.)

An aside: regarding the famous twenty-fifth anniversary image of The Man of Tomorrow on the cover of *Superman Annual* #7 (1963), Waid is "pretty sure it was Jack Adler who did that wash job on the stat-tiquette..."

## CONNECTIONS

Long after Murphy Anderson gave the interview which appears in *A Life In Comics*, he shared memories of when he last saw Curt. Because of their collaborations in *Superman* and in *Action Comics* as the "Swanderson" team, both gentlemen were often invited (with former editor, Julius Schwartz) to the same comics conventions. However, their last interaction did not occur at a con. On February 22, 2000, Murphy recalled meeting Curt at the DC offices in early 1999 to autograph a limited edition of 500 Superman lithographs (for sale at the now-defunct Warner Brothers Stores). Because Anderson's first and last names each contain more letters than his buddy's, it took him longer to sign. Swan jokingly gave Murphy a hard time for being slow, saying he was going out to "have a smoke" while waiting on his slow friend to catch up to him.

In the course of conducting the interviews, it became apparent that comic book and newspaper artists circulate (or at least they did) in a small world. Swan's publishing relationships tied him to Mort Walker, Dik Browne and other newspaper strip creators. His longtime friendship with Pulitzer Prize-winner John Fischetti also linked him to the realm of the editorial cartoonist. Other connections were noted; for example, those

*(continued on page 54)*

◆ **The Composite Superman emits some of his power, courtesy of Lightning Lad, from *World's Finest* #142, pencils by Swan and inks by Sheldon Moldoff.**

**Atmospheric Swan and Klein page from *World's Finest* #155, "The 1,000th Exploit of Batman and Superman."**

# INTERVIEW WITH

## by Edward Zeno (June 11 and June 13, 2002)

All images © DC Comics, Inc.

*David Mandel was one of the writers on the hit television show, Seinfeld. When we initially spoke by phone, he had just attended his tenth anniversary college reunion at Harvard.*

**David Mandel:** I'm a lifetime comic collector, though with my age that doesn't really explain why Swan... Certainly I was there on the back end in the '70s and early '80s when he was on the book. But the real answer probably goes more towards A) that old hardcover book, *Superman From The '30s To The '70s* and B) a lot of the really cool DC Digests that they used to publish. They reprint[ed] a lot of the, for lack of a better word, "wacky" '60s stories. And that's really where I first associated Swan, even before I knew he was Swan, with Superman. Again, going into those books and those reprints, those what-if stories, those fantasy stories... Superman Red, Superman Blue. What if Superman married Lois? What if Superman married Lana? All those different stories were where I sort of first basically fell in love with Swan (even though I didn't know I was falling in love with Swan).

FAR OUT IN SPACE EXISTS THE WACKIEST PLANET IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE... IT IS THE SQUARE BIZARRO WORLD, HOME PLANET OF THE STUPID BIZARRO CREATURES WHO ARE IMPERFECT DUPLICATES OF SUPERMAN AND HIS FRIENDS...

**Eddy Zeno:** And it's even more amazing because those stories were reprinted so small.

**Mandel:** Yeah, I love those digests and I miss them terribly. (Laughter)

**Zeno:** Did those crazy stories help to inspire you as a writer?

**Mandel:** I never really thought about it but I'd like to think that all the comic books and stuff certainly pushed me in general towards the writing field, and certainly imagination and all that kind of stuff.

**Zeno:** What did you find appealing about Curt's artwork?

**Mandel:** Boy, it was just so—I want to say the word is "simple," but not simple like the pejorative sense it gets connected to. Simple in the sense that it just was so easygoing and easy on the eyes and just perfect! Simple in terms of perfect; that's the best way of saying it. It was effortless and it was everything you wanted. I mean it was just a heroic Superman, a strong Superman—just perfect.

# DAVID MANDEL

**Zeno**: Well said. You mentioned a couple of the stories that stood out to you. What separated stories drawn by Curt Swan from those which were illustrated by other Superman artists?

**Mandel**: Boy, it's tough to say. I think part of it is since you accepted Superman by Swan to begin with, you were more accepting of a fantastical story when it was also drawn by Swan. It was sort of the problem with Marvel's *What If* books, as they eventually became. In the sense that... If you're sort of saying what if something happened to the Fantastic Four and it wasn't drawn by Jack Kirby, then you kind of went, well how could this happen? It's not Kirby. Here you were getting these sort of fantasy stories but it was Swan doing them, and since Swan *was* Superman, you just accepted it. And it made them easier to digest and that made them seem more real. And then the more you believed them, the better they were. Maybe that's a little too weird.

**Zeno**: No, to another comics fan or another Swan fan it actually makes sense. (Laughter)

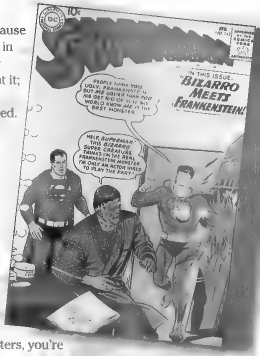
**Mandel**: You were just so much happier to have whatever was going to happen, happen when Swan was doing it.

**Zeno**: I take it that ...u eventually ...ught some of his ...ries in regular ...mic size rather ...an just digest size?

**...andel**: Yeah, both.

**...no**: Did it make ...y difference when ...u finally saw the ...ories at normal ...e?

**...andel**: Not to me ...cause, honestly, ...s like duck ...orinting. ...hatever you see ... the earliest part ... your life is what ...ou remember. So in a weird way, because I read these stories in digest form, I never thought twice about it; I didn't know the larger version existed. (Laughter)


10¢
DC
IN THIS ISSUE
"BIZARRO MEETS FRANKENSTEIN!"
PEOPLE THINK YOU LOOK FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER, BUT YOU'RE THE BEST SIDE OF THE WORLD'S WORST BAD MONSTER!
HELP SUPERMAN'S BIZARRO SURVIVE THREE LETHAL PERMANENTS! ONLY AN ARTIFICIAL MONSTER IS TOUGH ENOUGH TO PLAY THE GAME!

**Zeno**: Any other Superman artists that you're partial to?

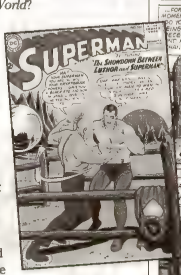
**Mandel**: No. I mean certainly nothing against any of the other Superman artists in any way, shape, or form. It's just with certain of these key characters, you're always going to have a certain artist on them. You know, rightly or wrongly. And for Superman, it's just always going to be Swan. Nothing against the guys that created Superman. Nothing against any of the many fine guys who are drawing it today. Ed McGuinness: what he does can be very interesting. It's just—I would pick certain people. Personally, if you said to me who's Spider-Man, I'm always going to pick Steve Ditko. That's Spider-Man to me. And with The Fantastic Four, I'm going to always say Kirby, I just am. And with The X-Men I might actually say John Byrne just because that really was a golden age—Claremont/Byrne. I don't mean to only pick artists. The writers, too, were very important. But Swan managed to bridge over so many different writers. Even with some of those '70s stories, which weren't always as strong, you kind of stuck with it 'cause Curt was still there. (Chuckle)

**Zeno**: If you could have written a comic book story to play to Swan's strengths as an artist, what would it have been about?

**Mandel**: I have a story I always wanted to do where a new hero shows up in Metropolis and steals a little of Superman's thunder. At the same time, the *Daily Planet* has a handsome new blonde sports reporter who wears glasses and is always disappearing at times of trouble. Clark begins

to suspect that the new reporter is the new hero, and begins to act a lot like Lois Lane trying to prove the guy's secret identity. I would like to write this story and have Curt Swan draw it. Too bad it will never happen.

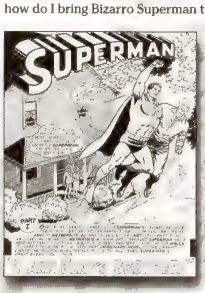
**Zeno**: Was it you who wrote the introduction to the DC reprint book, *Tales Of The Bizarro World*?
**Mandel**: I did actually. I wrote the intro, and I wrote a little fake interview with Bizarro for that.




**Zeno**: (Laughter) I'd forgotten about the interview. What was your impression of Curt Swan's Bizarro characters as opposed to others, like John Forte's or,Wayne Boring's versions?
**Mandel**: I love Forte and Boring, but there was a crudeness to their work—I am thinking more of Boring in this case. I loved that Swan made the character more a simple-minded Frankenstein, and you could also see that Bizarro and Superman were of similar shape, just Bizarro was different in the face.

SOON...THE SHIP LANDS ON A DESERT-LIKE WORLD AND, AFTER BUILDING A CRUDE RING OUT OF PETRIFIED LOGS...
THE GRAVITY ON THIS PLANET IS GREATER THAN EARTH'S, BUT THOSE GRAVITY SHOES I MADE GIVE YOU EXACTLY THE SAME POWERS AS MAKING THAT S-WAVE ON THIS KRYPTONITE-LIKE WORLD...
I SUPER-COMPRESSED MY CLARK KENT CLOTHES AND HID THEM IN THE POUCH OF MY CAPE! WHEN I WENT BACK TO THE SHIP FOR THE SHOES...
THAT'S GOOD! HE WAITED A LONG TIME...
...FOR THE MOMENT, NOW DO YOU'RE RED SUN POWERS...
OOF!
THE PENT-UP HATRED OF YEARS TURNS LUTHOR INTO A HUMAN TIGER!
SUPERMAN ARE ALMOST YOUR EQUAL IN STRENGTH, BUT I'VE GOT KRYPTONIAN POWERS I'VE ACQUIRED FROM THE METEORITE! THEREFORE, I'M INVULNERABLE...I CAN'T BE HURT!
WELL, MURDER ME, IN THAT CASE! I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU!
THE BOOK WOULD YOU, HUH?
WHAT?...NO! I SHOT YOU RIGHT IN THE EYE! AND NOW I SEE YOU'RE STILL STANDING!
OOF!
WHAT A FOOL I WAS TO ACCEPT LUTHOR'S CHALLENGE! I GOT MAN-INTO-MAN!
BUT SUDDENLY, SUPERMAN'S INSTINCT FOR SELF-DEFENCE MAKES HIM FORGET HIS MENTAL BLOCK...AND MAKES A THRILLING COMEBACK...!
I NEVER DARED HIT YOU HARD, KNOWING THE KIND OF POWER I'VE ACQUIRED...BECAUSE I KNEW THAT EVEN ONE BLOW WOULD KILL BUT NOW THAT WE'RE EVENLY MATCHED, IT'S A PEAK-LIFE
BIFF
BAM
42

**Zeno**: What gave you the idea to write the famous Bizarro episode for the *Seinfeld* television show?
**Mandel**: Obviously, the show had made comic references in the past. You know, they had spoken about comic books and the Superman statue was very clearly on display in Jerry's apartment. I believe there was a Superman magnet on his refrigerator. So the comic book side of Jerry was somewhat well known. As a comic book fan, it was certainly something that was always in the back of my mind. But I didn't sit down to create...like, oh how do I bring Bizarro Superman to the masses? The idea we came up with honestly came out of character stuff. I shouldn't say "we" in this case. I'll say "I" began exploring this idea of a boyfriend for Elaine who would be Jerry's exact opposite. And once you're in the world of exact opposites, that's sort of the jump to Bizarro. And when I ran it by Jerry, whereas most people wouldn't know what I was talking about, he knew exactly what I was talking about. Not only that, it was like, not only are we going to do it; we're gonna go as far as we can with it. Which was just a wonderful thing to do, you know?

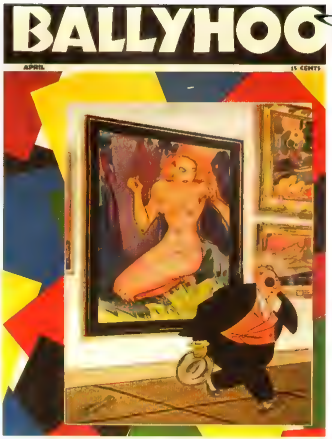



**Zeno**: If I remember, weren't all of the major characters kind and considerate?
**Mandel**: Yes, but it started with...again, going back to the origins of the idea, it came out of the idea of a boyfriend for Elaine who was Jerry's exact opposite. And that led to the idea that he would have these friends that were the further opposites of the other characters.

**Zeno**: It seems like non-comics fans enjoyed it as much as comic book fans.
**Mandel**: For a lot of people who maybe hadn't read a comic since they were a kid, Bizarro was one of those things where you probably hadn't thought about it in thirty years. But the second someone actually brought it up in a public forum, you never forgot that you saw it. So I think it woke some things in people, which was really nice.

**Zeno**: What were some of the other episodes that you wrote?
**Mandel**: I wrote some with [other] people, some without. I

*(continued on page 55)*



Three of Russell Patterson's watercolor covers for **Ballyhoo**, and the cover of the catalogue for a posthumous exhibition of Patterson's work. See "Funnies Farrago" for R.C. Harvey's article on Patterson.

CURT SWAN DEPICTED THE NOBILITY INHERENT IN SUPERHEROES, AND BY EXTENSION, IN ALL OF US; A NOBILITY BORN FROM THE FACT THAT ULTIMATELY WE MUST SHOULDER OUR BURDENS AND MAKE OUR DECISIONS IN SOLITUDE.

HE SET THESE QUIET MOMENTS OF REPOSE IN LANDSCAPES (LIKE THIS ONE FROM WORLD'S FINEST #155, 1966, "EXIT BATMAN, ENTER NIGHTMAN!," INKED BY KLEIN), THAT, IN THEIR MELANCHOLY STILLNESS...

...EVOKED THOSE OF EARLY 20TH CENTURY SURREALIST PAINTER GIORGIO DE CHIRICO, WHOSE ENIGMATIC PICTURES OF DESOLATE URBAN SPACES WERE DESCRIBED THUSLY...

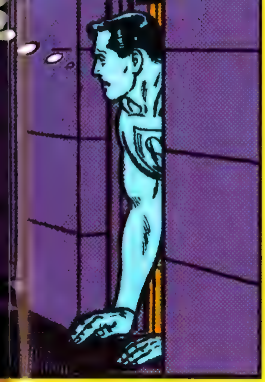
"THOUGH THE MELANCHOLY LAY HEAVILY OVER THEM, THEY WERE SHOT THROUGH WITH HOPES AND PRESENTIMENTS THAT WERE COMMUNICATED INSIDIOUSLY AND INEXPLICABLY TO THE OBSERVER, VISUALIZING THE BURIED ANXIETIES THAT STIR US... LIKE SWANS!"

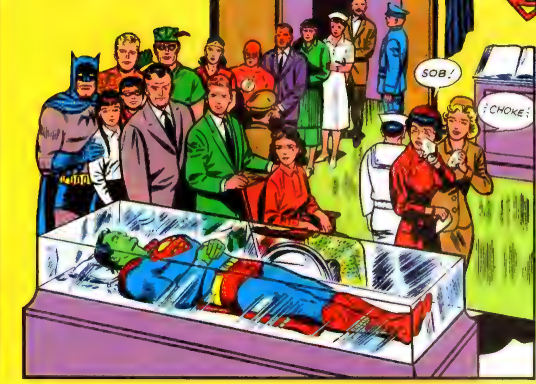
—JOSE PIERRE, SURREALIST PAINTING (UDDER PUBLISHING, 1971)

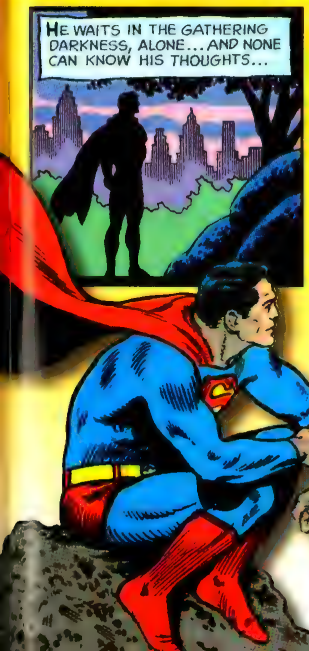
AND GOODBYE TO SMALLVILLE ...I'LL HAVE TO COME BACK IN THE MORNING AS SUPERBOY ON ONE VITAL ERRAND, AND THEN I'LL NEVER RETURN!

AND A LITTLE LATER, ALONE IN THE GARDENS OF THE KANDORIAN MANSION...

THESE FLOWERS... THESE BIRDS... ALL JUST AS ON OLD KRYPTON! IT MAKES ME THINK OF WHEN I WENT BACK THROUGH THE TIME-BARRIER TO KRYPTON BEFORE IT PERISHED, AND MET...

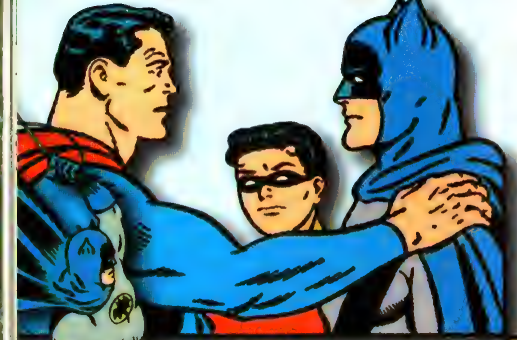





SWAN'S SUPERMAN *SELDOM* EXPRESSED FEELINGS OF *MELANCHOLY*; RARELY DID HE *BROOD*; YET THERE WAS OFTEN AN AIR OF PALPABLE *SADNESS* ABOUT HIM, TAKEN TO THE *EXTREME* IN 1961'S "*THE DEATH OF SUPERMAN!*" (INKED BY *STAN KAYE*), ABOVE, AND IN SWAN'S *LAST* SUPERMAN STORY IN '86, INKED BY *GEORGE PEREZ*, BELOW.

# WOR
# FIN



CURT SWAN WAS NO STRANGER TO BATMAN; PRIOR TO HIS 45 WORLD'S FINEST STORIES (1964-75), SWAN HAD BEEN COVER ARTIST OF THE BATMAN BOOKS (1958-59), AND HAD ILLUSTRATED NUMEROUS APPEARANCES OF THE DYNAMIC DUO IN SUPERMAN'S OWN BOOKS (ABOVE)! SWAN'S WORLD'S FINEST RUN IS MARKED BY THE REQUISITE INTERPLANETARY ADVENTURES, PUNCTUATED BY CLASHES BETWEEN THE TWO HEROES!

SIZZLING SUNS! SOME KIND OF PARADISE PLANET... LOOK AT THIS PLACE...
...AND THERE'S OUR WELCOMING COMMITTEE!
AH...YOU HAVE ARRIVED... I AM JEMPHIS!

RLD'S
EST
MEANWHILE, THE MAN OF STEEL HAS COME UPON THE MOST OMINOUS DISCOVERY OF ALL!
GREAT KRYPTON! THESE MODEL PLANETS AND THE COMPOSITE SUPERMAN BROODING OVER THEM ...IT'S AS THOUGH HE PLANS TO RULE NOT ONLY EARTH, BUT OTHER WORLDS!
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I DO PLAN, SUPERMAN
ARGUABLY THE MOST MEMORABLE OF SWAN'S IMAGES WERE THOSE OF THE COMPOSITE SUPERMAN (1964, INKED BY KLEIN), A PERFECTLY-SPLIT HYBRID OF THE TWO HEROES--EVERY READER'S WISH FULFILLMENT! DIORAMA-LIKE TABLEAUX, LIKE THE PANEL ABOVE (INKED BY SHELDON MOLDOFF), ALLEGORICAL IN ITS SYMBOLISM, WAS A COMMON MOTIF IN THE SWAN/WEISINGER OEUVRE!

DAYS OF

T.H.

# T.H.U.N.D.E.R.

## WALLY WOOD'S LAST HURRAH

by Todd Severin

It was a time of change.

A time of super-powered heroes, atomic-fueled science fiction and cold-war espionage. A time of innocence, giving way to confusion and rebellion. Of scientific awe mixed with paranoia and fear. Respect and reverence giving way to conspiracy and distrust.

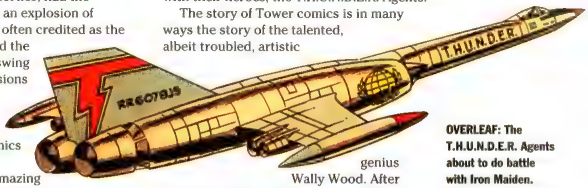
It was the mid-1960's, the peak of the Silver Age of comics.

The second coming of the super-hero found comic books everywhere. Not since the Golden Age of the forties, had the newsstands seen such an explosion of creativity. DC Comics, often credited as the company that launched the Silver Age, was in full swing with quick selling revisions of the Flash, Green Lantern, the Atom, Batman and Superman. Marvel Comics burst out of a 1950s hibernation with the amazing adventures of the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, The Avengers, Iron Man and the Hulk.

Encouraged by the potential financial windfall in the comics market, publishers popped out of the woodwork, releasing an onslaught of four-color heroes. Archie Comics, who had earlier revived their patriotic hero the Shield, added The Fly and the Jaguar to their stable, as well as their souped-up version of the Shadow. Harvey comics created Jack Frost and the Piranha while Charlton revamped the Blue Beetle and created Captain Atom.

While many of these publishers managed to rack up sales with their books, no publisher so successfully captured the growing turbulence of the times, as did Tower Comics with their heroes, the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents.

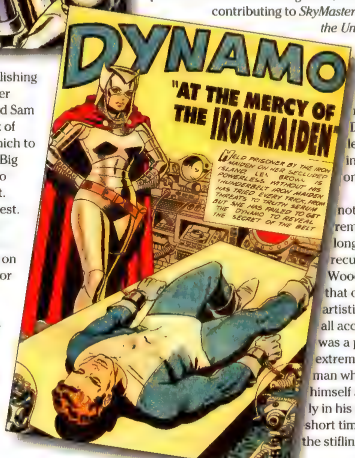
The story of Tower comics is in many ways the story of the talented, albeit troubled, artistic genius Wally Wood. After witnessing the increasing sales of DC and Marvel, Tower Publications, Inc., then a successful publisher of paperback novels, decided to enter the comic book field by creating a four-color division to their compa-




**OVERLEAF: The T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents about to do battle with Iron Maiden. This beautiful drawing is courtesy of comic book great Jerry Ordway with colors by Laurie Kronenberg.**

THUNDER Agents ©2002 John Carbonarro

©RDWAY




ny, Tower Comics, Inc. This new publishing venture was left in the hands of former MLJ/Archie editors Harry Shorten and Sam Schwartz. Shorten was given the task of discovering talent and ideas upon which to build a company that could rival the Big Two. Eventually, his search led him to Wood's small, single room apartment. There, he found the answer to his quest.

By 1965, Wood had already established himself as one of the best and most creative artists in comics. Born on June 17, 1927, Wood's entire reason for existence seemed to revolve around telling stories. As a child, Wood created volumes of comics, painstakingly drawn in notebooks sewn together by his mother. He even dreamt of finding a magic pencil that would allow him to draw like Alex Raymond.

His passion for comics led him to enroll at the Minneapolis School of Art and then at Burne Hogarth's Cartoonists and Illustrators School in New York City. Finally, in 1949, he broke into the professional ranks as an assistant to George Wunder on the *Terry and the Pirates* strip. This work led him to the Eisner Studio, where he became an integral part of the bullpen, working extensively on the *Spirit*.

Wood moved on to produce a vast amount of work for the Fox Company before he finally created his own studio with Joe Orlando and Sid Check. In 1951, Wood took his work to EC Publisher William Gaines. Gaines immediately saw the quality of Wood's talent and made him an integral part of his stable of artists. Today, Wood is most closely associated with his ground-breaking renderings on *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy*, but while at EC he proved himself to be a prolific and versatile artist, producing work for all of EC's titles, establishing himself as a master of all genres, from western to horror to satire.

Clearly though, it was in the science fiction arena that Wood excelled, telling remarkable stories set on exotic worlds, populated with beautiful women, amazing machinery and his famous bug-eyed monsters. His love and passion for science fiction would later go on to become an integral part of his legendary work on *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*.

After the demise of EC's comic line, Wood continued to produce work for *Mad Magazine*, while at the same time contributing to *SkyMasters* and *Challengers of the Unknown* with Jack Kirby. Eventually, he found his way to Marvel, where he completely redesigned Daredevil, leaving his indelible mark on the character.

But Wood was not destined to remain at Marvel long. One of the recurring themes of Wood's career was that of control and artistic freedom. By all accounts, Wood was a painfully shy, extremely introverted man who expressed himself almost exclusively in his art. Within a very short time, he grew to resent the stifling work atmosphere at

Marvel, where Lee or the Comics Code dictated everything that he drew. His frustration with his editors grew to the point that he later advised aspiring comic book artists, "Do not seek to be a creative writer or artist. Do not care about doing anything good. That will only put you at the mercy of those who will always hate you because you can do something they can't."

Further, Wood was disenchanted with the corporate setup, which mandated that his creations be turned over to the company, thereby denying him creator's rights or royalties.

Disgusted with the limitations imposed upon him, Wood left Marvel and set out to create his own magazine, a ground breaking independent publishing venture, *Witzend*. Wood's creation turned out to be a minor masterpiece of exotic worlds, powerful heroes, gorgeous maidens, mischievous elves, anthropomorphic lizards and tentacled monsters, all culled from his fertile imagination. As creatively successful as the magazine was, however, it was just as much a commercial failure, plagued by distribution problems and low sales. Soon, Wood found himself broke with few prospects on the horizon. This failure, combined with Wood's failing personal life (which included three marriages, all ending in divorce with no children, as well as alcoholism and a constant battle with heroin addiction) led him to the edge of desperation.

LATER, AFTER A PRELIMINARY BRIEFING AND EXAMINATION...
BECAUSE OF YOUR PHYSICAL STAMINA YOU'VE BEEN SELECTED TO USE THE "THUNDER BELT"!
I WILL, SIR!
DON'T STOP BEFORE YOU'VE REACHED 10,000 STRIDES! TAPE PUT IT ON!
IN FIVE MINUTES THE BELT WILL HAVE ATTUNED ITSELF TO YOUR METABOLISM - THEN ONLY YOU WILL BE ABLE TO USE IT!
FIVE MINUTES LATER
ENOUGH TIME HAS ELAPSED! NOW TURN THE DIAL ON YOUR BELT!
AS HE TURNS THE DIAL THE VERY ATOMS OF THE SURROUNDING AIR ARE RENT BY THE CHARGE OF ENERGY SELECTED!
CR-RACK!
IT WOULDN'T SOUND GOOD'S NOW RELEASED THROUGH CHANNELS IN THE BOOTS - AND SO YOUR WEIGHT HAS INCREASED IN PROPORTION!
AND NOW, MY BOY, YOU'VE ONLY TO MOVE AND YOUR WEIGHT - THE IMPACT WILL SUBJECT ON YOUR FOOT!
OOPS! - HERE GOES! I'LL PROBABLY WIND UP BREAKING MY HAND!
KRUMF!

It was at that moment that *T.H.U.N.D.E.R.* was born.

With nowhere else to turn, and refusing to return to the indignity of the Big Two, Wood took his ideas and his work to Tower. Shorten jumped at the chance to work with him, guaranteeing him artistic and editorial freedom and an alliance was born. Wood became Tower's top artist, created the characters and wrote most of the scripts.

The first issue of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, a sixty-four page, 25-cent comic, hit the stands cover-dated November 1965 and was unlike anything the comic market had seen before. With this very first issue, we were introduced to T.H.U.N.D.E.R., **T**he **H**igher **U**nited **N**ations **D**efense **E**nforcement **R**eserves, and its staff of highly trained operatives. In creating *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, Wood allowed his abundant imagination to run wild, creating the perfect heroes for the changing times of the mid sixties.

THUNDER AGENT
NoMan
SURE YOU WANT TO BE THROUGH WITH DOCTOR DUNN?
LOOK AT HIM! HE'S ALIVE! AND I'M RESPONSIBLE!
IT WILL MEAN IMMORTALITY IF SUCCESSFUL... BUT EVEN IF IT DOES SUCCEED...
I KNOW... I WILL CEASE BEING... HUMAN!
BUT MAN IS NOT HUMAN... AND THIS MAN NOW KNOWS SUCH A MUCH GREATER ANYWAY... EVEN IF THE EXPERIMENT IS A FAILURE, I WON'T HAVE LOST MUCH!
BUT WE'VE ALL BEEN YOUR GREAT MIND DOCTOR AFTER ALL... IT WAS YOUR EXPERIMENTS IN COLLABORATION WITH PROF. JENNINGS BEFORE HIS DEATH, THAT PERFECTED THIS EXPERIMENT!

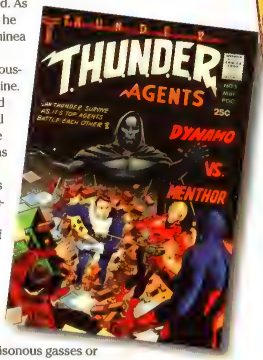
Spies and counterspies were the hot item of the day, with the popularity of James Bond and the Man from U.N.C.L.E. both at their peak. Wood took this basic concept and combined his mastery of science fiction with his experience with super-heroes. The T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents were an amazing fusion of all three genres. Each Agent was a normal human being, working for the United Nations and augmented by technology to super-human standards.

The premise was simple. In the first chapter of the first issue, we learned that agents of an international terrorist called The Warlord had attacked the lab of a brilliant T.H.U.N.D.E.R. scientist, Professor Wallace Jennings. T.H.U.N.D.E.R. arrived too late to save the scientist's life, but they managed to recover his inventions, an electron molecular intensifier belt, a light polarizing cape and cowl and a cybernetic helmet. Taking these devices, T.H.U.N.D.E.R. set out to create an army of super-heroes to compete with the escalating threat of international terrorism.

This first hero introduced in *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* #1 was Dynamo, soon to become the most popular of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents. Len Brown was a typical 23 year-old clerk lost within the halls of T.H.U.N.D.E.R., until the day that the High Command discovered that he had the perfect physiology to use the new Thunderbelt. After wearing the belt for five minutes to allow it to attune to his metabolism, Brown turned on the belt and amid a flash of explosive power, became Dynamo, a man whose molecular density had been changed to the consistency of steel. Dynamo had the power of 100 men and weighed more than a thousand pounds! The belt made Dynamo nearly indestructible, resistant to bullets, knives and small explosives, it would take a missile or a tank to take him down.

There was, however, one fatal flaw. Once activated, the belt could only be used for a short period of time or else it would remove his strength to the point that it would render him helpless. The very source of his strength would be the cause of his death. To warn him, the belt was modified so that an alarm sounded after the belt had been in use for twenty-five minutes. That left Dynamo with only five more minutes of power before the belt automatically shut-off, leaving him powerless and vulnerable. It could then not be turned back on until it had recharged. This made for many hair-raising tales as Dynamo found himself in the midst of an enemy camp, with the alarm ticking off the seconds until his powers faded away.

The next hero, introduced in the very next chapter, was Noman, the most unique of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents. Doctor Anthony Dunn, a 76 year-old wheelchair-bound T.H.U.N.D.E.R. scientist, realized that he was not much longer for this world. As his scientific finale, he volunteered as a guinea pig for his latest invention, a consciousness transfer machine. After being wheeled into the mechanical chamber, his entire mental make-up was transferred to electronic impulses which were then re-etched into the brains of a group of androids. Each android had an identical blue-skinned, bald-headed powerfully built body that was resistant to poisonous gasses or blows that would render a normal human unconscious. Dunn had the ability to project his consciousness to any



one of these bodies, thereby inhabiting whichever body he chose.

The androids did, however, also have a fatal flaw. Each body was just as vulnerable to penetrating weapons, such as bullets or knives, as was a human. This left Dr. Dunn in a very vulnerable position that made for many cliff-hanging scenes. While on a mission, if one body was killed, he had only seconds to mentally project his consciousness to another host body or else he too would die.

Noman was similarly bestowed with one of Professor Wallace's inventions, a light polarizing cape and cowl that when activated rendered Noman invisible. Like Dynamo's belt, Noman's cloak also had a time constraint on its action. After ten minutes of continuous use, the cloak shut itself off to recharge.

Noman was by far the most interesting and complex of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents. Being an android, he was devoid of human emotion, yet plagued by the memories of human feelings from his human mind. Dr. Dunn fretted over this constantly, lamenting the loss of his human body and regretting his decision to transfer his mind to an artificial body that could not sense, nor feel. This despair made Noman a tragic character worthy of other classic heroes, such as Oedipus, also drenched in the mythos of tragedy.

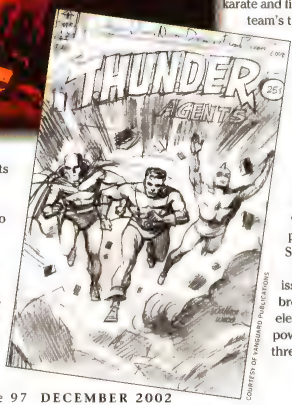
Noman's name mimicked these classical origins. In the *Odyssey*, Ulysses, after blinding the Cyclops, called himself "noman" referring to the inability of his enemy to see him. With the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. cape activated, Dr. Dunn obtained that same invisibility.

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agent Menthor came to life in the next chapter. Originally a spy for the evil Warlord, John J. Janus masqueraded as a citizen applying to the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. recruitment program. After obtaining the highest score ever recorded on the intelligence entrance exam, Janus was suited with Professor Wallace's cybernetic helmet and became the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agent, Menthor.

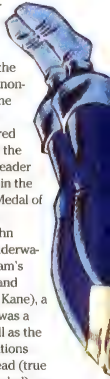
MENTHOR
NAME: Janus, John J. AGE: 28
DESCRIPTION: HAIR: Blonde EYES: Blue HEIGHT: 5' 11"
WEIGHT: 165
SPECIALTY: Cybernetic Helmet.
REMARKS: The helmet amplifies the brain power of wearer, releasing latent potential for ESP, Telekinesis, Teleportation etc...

With the powerful helmet, Janus's already prodigious mind was raised to its ultimate level. He had the ability to mentally drain the strength from his opponents and add it to his own. He also had the power of telekinesis, telepathy and super hypnotism.

John Janus (who's name came from Janus, the Greek God with two faces, referring to his double-agent intentions) mixed in well with the other agents, but never relinquished his intent on destroying T.H.U.N.D.E.R.




Unfortunately for him, the helmet had an unexpected effect; that of magnifying the ultimate good in its wearer. Anyone who had even the slightest bit of good in him, became totally good when wearing the helmet. This power had a rather profound effect on the double agent. Without the helmet, Janus spent his time scheming to destroy the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, but whenever he donned the helmet, his evil intentions were swept aside and he'd fight to the death to save his partners. This made Janus a cybertechnic Jeckyl and Hyde and made for some fascinating story lines.



Finally, issue one introduced the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad, a group of non-powered agents, four men and one woman, who dashed around the world alongside the super-powered heroes, battling the evil forces of the Warlord. Guy (Guy Gilbert), the leader of the squad and a former Major in the armed forces who received the Medal of Honor, was a military tactics and strategy specialist. Dynamite (John Adkins), a former officer of an underwater demolition squad, was the team's muscleman, demolitions expert and resident dimwit. Kitten (Kathryn Kane), a former M.I.T. science professor, was a karate and firearms expert as well as the team's technical communications specialist. Egghead (true name never revealed) was a genius and strategy specialist, while Weed (William Wylie) was the team's lock pick and escape artist. Weed, a character rumored to be based on Wood's own personality and likeness, was a reformed criminal with a shady past who quickly became the most popular of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad members.

The final chapter of this first issue of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* brought all of these separate elements together into one power-packed finale; each of the three agents, along with the

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad, fighting side by side against the evil forces of The Warlord.

This thrill-a-minute first issue was written by Wally Wood, Larry Ivie and Len Brown (who named the Dynamo alter ego after himself) with spectacular artwork by Wally Wood, Gil Kane, Mike Sekowsky and Reed Crandall and all for the cost of one quarter!

Each subsequent issue of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* followed this same format of multi-chapter stories, where each chapter featured a different T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agent or the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad. Usually there were some team-up stories and a slam-bang action packed finale. Tower also continued with the 25-cent, 68-page format, giving more story for the reading public's money.

Despite all the action, it was the human qualities that Wood brought to the work that made *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* stand out. We were reminded that the Agents, whether super powered or not, were average, everyday people, doing a job. There were no secret identities. Everyone knew that Len Brown was the Agent Dynamo and he didn't receive any special attention or accolades because of this. Laying his life on the line was what was expected of him to protect the free world from evil. We met Len Brown's boss, the Chief, who constantly derided Brown as being a loafer. We also met Alice, the Chief's secretary, and Brown's main off-and-on love interest throughout the series.

It was this human element that became the pervasive thread that ran through all 20 issues of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* and held the disjointed chapters together as a cohesive series. Being merely human, the Agents were subject to the same imperfections of all humans. When Dynamo made a mistake, the chief tore into him. When Noman saw a couple walking hand in hand through the park, he yearned inside to feel a human emotion. When Guy and Kitten eventually fell in love, their concern and compassion for each other overshadowed each dangerous mission that they undertook.

The human imperfection, that was so unique to the *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* comic, also meant that the T.H.U.N.D.E.R Agents could die. And they did. Before this, super-heroes in an ongoing series were always immune to the threat of death. Everyone who read *Justice League of America* or *The Avengers* knew that all the heroes would survive that issue's ordeal and live to fight again. Readers of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* never had that same certainty.

This first major character to die in action was Egghead from the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad, who met his demise in the second issue of the series. In this story, the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad had been dispatched to the Latin American country, San Bolivar, to confront a group of communists that had overrun the government using a mind-bending gas. The T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad liberated the country, but not before Egghead was killed when he volunteered to stay behind and cover the retreat of his fellow Squad teammates.

The death of Egghead wasn't a serious blow to the comic or the reader. Being a strategic specialist, his area of expertise overlapped with Guy's, making his abilities redundant. And since he was just one member of a Squad of five, the team was able to pull themselves together and carry on with out him. But he wasn't the only death in the series.

Issue 7 presented one of the all-time classic stories of the Silver Age. In the final story of this issue, "A Matter of Life and Death," the Warlords overpowered and kidnapped Menthor, planning to make copies of his helmet to use for world domination. Immediately, the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents and the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad rushed to his rescue,

# Under the Sea

by Todd Severin

In addition to the exciting adventures of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, Tower introduced another espionage-tinged title to its ranks. Premiering January 1966, *U.N.D.E.R.S.E.A. Agent* joined *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* as the latest acronym in the battle against world-wide terrorism. U.N.D.E.R.S.E.A. (United Nations Department of Experiment and Research Systems Established at Atlantis) featured the underwater adventures of Lt. Davy Jones, whose base of operations was a vast underwater complex built upon the ruins of the ancient city of Atlantis.

Jones was assisted by an assortment of characters both human and dolphin, in his James Bond-esque battles against the evil Dr. Fang, an agent of the Red Chinese whose goal was world domination. The highlight of the series was the spectacular covers and interior art provided by Gil Kane.

*U.N.D.E.R.S.E.A. Agent* lasted for only six issues, folding in March 1967. Davy Jones and his clan did make one appearance in *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, getting a feature chapter in *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* #13. Unfortunately, there never was a team-up between these two very different branches of the United Nations. It would have been fun to see the agents of T.H.U.N.D.E.R. and U.N.D.E.R.S.E.A. joining forces on land and sea to battle the mad plans of an evil dictator. But with the demise of his own comic, Lt. Davy Jones and his crew faded away into the oceans of comic book obscurity and were never seen again.

unaware that The Warlords had planned on their arrival and set a deadly trap that would kill them all instantly. At the last possible moment, Menthor broke free and rushed to warn his comrades. The Warlords fired their weapons, striking him in the back, but the determined Menthor struggled forward, towards the booby trap. The Warlords fired again and again, striking him four more times, but still Menthor staggered onward. Ignoring the pain and his fading life force, he finally hurled himself into the battery of deadly laser beams that guarded the cave's entrance, sacrificing himself to save his partners.

Menthor's death was described thusly:

*For a moment, the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents stare at the lifeless body of Menthor in stunned disbelief…Then as one, they turn…There is no need for words…With blazing eyes, Dynamo bursts through the wall as if it were paper. The T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents fight in silent, savage fury, giving no quarter…and the green men and their mindless slaves are forced back…ever back, until there is no longer any retreat…only extinction!*

At the rain-soaked, wind-swept funeral the Agents tried to come to terms with Menthor's sacrifice. Finally it was noted that, "Greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friend."

And with that note, the death knell was sounded on the innocence of the sixties. While other publishers were busy pumping out "campy and crazy" heroes, "pop art" or giddy teen books, Tower brought realism into the super-hero genre in a way that hadn't been seen since the EC war stories of the fifties.

Without any hype to promote sales, any warning or explanation, Tower killed off one of its most popular heroes in the prime of his career, and did it with dignity and grace. The comic world would never be the same again.

Reader response to Menthor's death was impassioned and furious. For many issues after the eventful chapter, readers continued to write protesting the loss of a favorite Agent, arguing that there was no room for death in a comic magazine or realism intruding on their fantasy world. But the editors refused to relent. They had made their point. On the eve of America's entry into the Vietnam War, Tower made its readers consider the reality of war and battle and the inevitable loss of human life.

Other T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents were introduced to fill Menthor's void. In issue 4 (before Menthor's death) Tower introduced their newest Agent, Lightning. In this story, Baron Von Kampf, a Prussian air ace in WWII, had organized a new army of neo-Nazi's and created a powerful "slow" gas that could slow people down to 1/10 their normal speed. T.H.U.N.D.E.R. responded by developing a speed-inducing beam rifle that could speed up the Squad to ten times their normal speed, thus countering the Baron's gas.

Tragedy, however, struck when the Squad sped off to battle the Baron's army. Guy was shot and left for dead while

the rest of the Squad was captured. Back at T.H.U.N.D.E.R. central, Guy recovered from his injuries and was offered a chance to save his friends. Fitted with a suit designed from the same principle as the speed-inducer rifle, Guy became Lightning, the super-speed T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agent, capable of moving ten times faster than the average human. Along with the power, however, came a deadly side effect. The T.H.U.N.D.E.R. brass informed Guy that each moment that he used his super-speed suit, his lifespan would be shortened by the same amount. Ignoring the consequences, Guy took the suit and sped off to save his teammates.

In the following issues, Lightning became a popular Agent who constantly wrestled with the personal cost of his heroism. Kitten, Guy's love interest, became particularly concerned about his use of the suit, realizing that each moment that he used it brought him that much closer to death.

The final super-powered Agent to be introduced was in the issue following Menthor's death. "Enter...The Raven" brought the reader to Craig Lawson, a former trapeze artist, acrobat, gymnast and skydiver who was hired to test out a new anti-gravity device. Unbeknownst to T.H.U.N.D.E.R., Lawson intended to steal the suit and sell it to the highest bidder (the last in the long line of T.H.U.N.D.E.R. traitors). During their first battle with the Warlords, however, Lightning saved Raven's life, causing Raven to reconsider his criminal intent and devote his life towards working side by side with the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents.

Despite the excellent work Tower invested in its other Agents, the character of Raven was never fully integrated into the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents series. He rarely appeared on the covers and almost never appeared in the team-up stories. His costume changed with each issue and his stories were lackluster until the excellent Gil Kane took over the character and provided some stunning artwork and story continuity. Even so, the Raven never rivaled the other Agents in terms of popularity.

By this time, Tower had begun to create spin-off titles for its more popular characters. *Dynamo* #1 appeared in August 1966, boasting the title, "The Greatest T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agent of Them All!" This title was created by the same team that put out *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* and featured solo stories of Dynamo, along with team-up T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents and T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad stories. *Noman* quickly followed suit, debuting November 1966. Neither of these two series caught on and both folded quickly, with *Dynamo* lasting for four issues while *Noman* only survived for two.

No great comic book series would be complete without a great assortment of villains, and T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents had villains to spare. Evil rained down upon the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents like a summer deluge. Threatening the free world were the likes of the Warlords (who were in reality a subterranean race bent on destroying the surface world), S.P.I.D.E.R. (a sinister crime organization), Andor the Immortal (a super-powered villain who fell in love with Kitten), Vortex (with his cyclone creation machine), Doctor Sparta (who teleported dinosaurs into downtown New York) and the lovely Iron Maiden.

True to the innovative designs of the heroes, the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. villains were just as remarkably crafted. The villains weren't just tools used to promote storylines. Rather, each villain had his or her own story, needs and motivations. Andor, in particular, was a sympathetic character. As an orphaned child, he had been kidnapped by the subterraneans and "given" super powers comparable to those of Menthor, Dynamo and Lightning combined. His masters then sent him to the surface world to kill Dynamo. In a powerful battle, Andor bested Dynamo and was about to kill him when Kitten intervened. Instantly, Andor fell in love with her and fled the scene in a confused rage. He returned to his subterranean home base where he killed his creator.

The Iron Maiden proved herself to be the most interesting member of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. rogues gallery. An evil temptress, dressed in skintight body armor and drawn with typical Wood panache, she was part hero, part villain, much like Catwoman, and had a love-hate relationship with Dynamo. Often, Dynamo would be sent into some foreign land to battle one of her evil plots, and wind up face to face with her. The sexual tension between these two was palpable. At one point, Iron Maiden finally declared her love for Dynamo, acknowledging that he was "the only man fit for her, the only man worthy of her love." Dynamo successfully rebuffed her advances, but other stories showed him saving her life and asking her to give up her life of evil.

Despite the depth of realism, *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* wasn't a somber book. While it never laid claim to the campy humor of many of its contemporary titles, the Tower staff wrote many of their stories with a good eye for satire and humor. This quality may be best seen in the Wonder Weed story, where the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad member, Weed, was hypnotized to believe that he had superpowers. After creating a Wonder Weed costume, he set out to battle crime, unknowingly aided by the real super powers of Dynamo, Noman and Lightning. The tongue in cheek humor of this story was a nice balance to some of the more serious tales.

Creating all these glorious tales was perhaps the greatest bullpen of artists brought together since the glory days of EC. Wood recruited an amazing stable of talent for his venture, including himself, Gil Kane, Steve Ditko, Chic Stone, Al Williamson, George Tuska, Dan Adkins, Dick Ayers, Reed Crandall, Mike Sekowsky and Ogden Whitney.

Despite this fantastic array of characters, stories and

creators, *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* was a financial failure and wound up $100,000 in debt in only four years. Theories abound as to why the Tower Line had to fold. Most historians blame the Tower demise on the unconventional format and price. At 25 cents per issue; the cost of a single issue of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* was more than twice that of its competitors. While Tower did provide more than twice the story to go along with its higher price tag, it's quite possible that children buying comics perceived a better value in getting two books for their quarter rather than one. While this argument may have some validity, it must be remembered that Marvel was similarly producing 25-cent giant specials and annuals at the same time, which continued to sell well. Therefore, there appears to be more to the story than just the price.

Another theory is that the stories were simply too mature and aimed at too intelligent an audience to catch on with the kids. Comic book fandom hadn't yet risen to the heights of popularity that brought in many adult readers, leaving the comic book buying audience to be a collection of 12 year-old boys. The serious tones of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* might not have appealed to this group. Remember, souped-up camp was the rage then, not a tale of a depressed android longing to feel the touch of a human female.

Another interesting theory is the conspiracy tale. It is well documented that Tower had horrible distribution problems with their comics. Few newsstands carried the Tower line and when they did, they usually only carried a few copies of each issue. Wood himself blamed Tower's failure on this poor distribution. The question becomes, why did Tower, who had long ago established a successful distribution network for its paperbacks, suddenly run into so much trouble distributing its comics? Conspiracy theorists claim that the emergence of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* came as a serious threat to both Marvel and DC who recognized both the incredible talent of the Tower creators and the innovative characters they had devised. Rumor has it that the Big Two combined their massive power and bullied the newsstands into not carrying the Tower line.

Whether or not this theory is true will probably never be known. Clearly, the Big Two were painfully aware of Tower's presence and potential threat. This awareness was never more clearly seen than when the Big Two started producing satire comics. In each case, the first outside property that they each parodied was the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents. *Not Brand Echh #2* pitted the agents of S.H.E.E.S.H. against the B.L.U.N.D.E.R. (Bedraggled League Uv Nations Defenseless Encroachment Reserves) Agents. The first issue of the *Inferior Five* Featured the H.U.R.R.I.C.A.N.E. (Heinous Unscrupulous Rats and Rogues Initiating Criminal Anarchy and Nefarious Evil) Agents, including Powerhouse (Dynamo), Missing Link (Noman), Mr. Mental (Menthor), Yellow Streak (Lightning), Blackbird (Raven) and parodies of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad including Crabgrass (Weed). Was this parody meant to be a compliment or a recognition of a threat? The truth is still out there.

Whatever the reason, after many delays in production and distribution of its later issues, Tower finally folded its comic line in November 1969. All in all, Tower produced 20 issues of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, four of *Dynamo*, two of *Noman* and a few other assorted action and teen titles (see sidebar).

Word has it that Wood was crushed by the failure of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*. With nowhere else to go, he was forced to swallow his pride and return to working for the companies that he so despised. Moving to DC, he produced some lackluster work inking *Anthro, Captain Action* and the *Angel and the Ape*. It was at this time that he also worked on the *Sally Forth* and *Cannon* strips for the US Army.

Later in the seventies he did enjoy producing work for Warren on the *Combat, Eerie, Creepy* and *Vampirella* magazines, but by this time his health was failing rapidly. Years of alcohol and heroin abuse took a heavy toll on him. Eventually, he suffered a stroke, which caused him to lose vision in one eye and led to kidney failure. Reportedly, his hands became too shaky for him to draw, and with no other outlet for him to express himself, the pain was too much for him to take. On November 3, 1981, at the age of 54, Wallace Wood ended his life by shooting himself through the temple.

At the ceremonial spreading of Wood's ashes at sea, William Gaines, Wood's former publisher at EC, acknowledged Wood's lifelong dedication to his art. "He was a sweet man, a pixie. He died too young with too much left undrawn."

In retrospect, it is easy to see that *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* represented the pinnacle of the career of a story telling genius. Given free artistic reign. Wood created some of the most dynamic, exciting and deeply human stories and characters of the Silver Age. The esteem with which this small body of work is held by collectors today serves as a fitting tribute to Wood's vision. At a time when science still inspired awe, Wood perfectly captured the concept of human integration with machine. By fusing the super-hero and science fiction genres, Wood created a world where the emergence of technology was a spark of optimism against a bleak background of our changing society. Where the inventiveness of science wasn't a dehumanizing tool, but a force, harnessed by hard working, diligent people for the betterment of all mankind.

It is for these reasons, that comic critic Pete Scott has stated that *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* "remains unequaled to this day for its sheer verve, gusto and unique visual sophistication."

# T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents'

## John Carbonaro

**by Jennifer M. Contino**

They say lightning never strikes the same place twice, but John Carbonaro is thankful that thunder does! *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* is returning in beautiful Archive editions from DC Comics and there are hints that also on the horizon is an ongoing series sometime mid to late 2003.

**CBM:** What got you into comics?

**JOHN CARBONARO:** Well, in the fifties, Superman was on TV and when someone put a comic on a bed (I wasn't tall enough to reach the table), I recognized him even though I couldn't read. My Mom got tired of re-reading the comic to me, so she taught me to read from it. And then I bought my first comic…

**CBM:** Got a story about that?

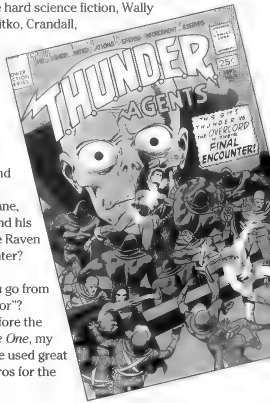
**CARBONARO:** Sure! I took two coke bottles to the store for deposit. I received a dime since the clerk was out of nickels. I thought two nickels was more than one dime at the time. I took the dime to the candy store and only wanted one five-cent candy. The clerk remembered when I tried to buy a dime comic for a nickel and told me I had enough to buy one instead of the candy. Tough decision, but that dime and the *Superman* comic I bought with Brainiac on the cover changed my life greatly, and a little bit yours and anyone taking the time to read this.

**CBM:** Why'd you keep reading comics?

**CARBONARO:** Before I could grow out of them, the continuity thing started in the sixties along with Spider-Man. Those things hooked me and just about everyone else. Many of us could no longer "grow out of them"—a new phenomenon. I read all the super-heroes, westerns, and many of the war comics. DC did the best war comics. Jack Kirby was great on *Rawhide Kid* and some *Two-Gun Kid* comics. Little Archie solving mysteries was a good read too.

**CBM:** How did you discover *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*?

**CARBONARO:** Well, living in NY, I had good distribution and saw them when they first arrived on the stands. Wow! All good stuff. A hero, Dynamo, that had to win in 30 minutes or less, a beautiful villain chasing him and an island of dinosaurs turned into a dinosaur zoo where they were grown. Some hard science fiction, Wally Wood art, Steve Ditko, Crandall, Adkins and Steve Skeates version of Lightning. All in double-sized packages. Long stories could be done in one book, short stories on different heroes and team-ups... Did I mention Tuska, Kane, Manny Stallman and his unique take on the Raven helping a Nazi hunter?




**CBM:** How did you go from collector to "creator"?

**CARBONARO:** Before the Agents, I did *Phase One*, my "fanzine" in '71. We used great fans and mostly pros for the

humor in *MAD Comics/Magazine*. Wally's roots were in science fiction and he quickly mastered the genre. He carried it over with him to the Agents.

For example...Len Brown became Dynamo by wearing a belt that changed his density. For the 30 minutes or so his human body could stand it, he became a sci-fi superman with super strength and near invulnerability.

Then Doctor Dunn transferred his brain patterns electronically into an android who was given an *invisibility* cape—more sci-fi. The android not being human was called NoMan, as in the name Ulysses gave to the Cyclops in the Odyssey.

And the third of the original T.H.U.N.D.E.R. super agents, Menthor (John Janus' kewl thing was Janus is the name of a two-faced Greek God and John was originally a *double* agent), was someone with a helmet with mind driven powers like telepathy and telekinesis. All in 1965.

**CBM**: Why do you think sci-fi worked for this series?
**CARBONARO**: A changing of the guard brought super-heroes back in the late fifties, early sixties. Wally even worked at Marvel and gave Daredevil the costume he wears today. Another advantage was that Marvel carried their stories over in the sixties, giving them more depth as they gained continuity. An advantage to do better stories was brought forth in the super-hero genre. This is why many trade paperbacks reprint story arcs today. Before the sixties, you didn't really have that.

art ... Wrightson, Adams, Kaluta, Ken Kelly, Murphy Anderson, Rich Buckler, Jeff Jones, Gray Morrow, Erine Colon and Frank Brunner. We also used writers like Wolfman, Len Wein, Skeates, Goodwin, Denny O'Neil and Gerry Conway. A Ken Barr painting replaced the Jim Steranko we almost had. More pro, less fan in that book. It was filled with professional stuff edited by fans. I co-published and my editor was Sal Quartuccio of SalQ Production fame. That was a learning experience. Anyhow, I didn't get back into it until after college and after I acquired the *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*.

**CBM**: What is *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*?
**CARBONARO**: The Higher United Nations Defense Enforcement Reserve. The T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents come across as super-heroes battling evil worldwide. A closer look though shows they are science fiction based. Their creator, Wally Wood, was famous for his '50s EC Comics science fiction and then his

**CBM**: How did you become involved with T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents?
**CARBONARO**: I met someone who was once an assistant to the president of Tower Publishing. After asking (for like four months) to help me make contact, I did. I licensed them from Tower and then eventually bought them. *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* was a great series. Packaged well in double-size comics, and with original characters to the world of heroes. Not just a sci-fi story that ended with a bang, but an ongoing series of it. Wally Wood was the driving force behind it. He was/is regarded as one of the best of our business.

**CBM**: How hard was it to obtain the rights to *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* and what did those rights entail?

**CARBONARO**: Well, I was paying a licensing fee in the beginning and when an artist cut out with most of the next book and some of the money from dealers. I had a hard time. I took out a loan and pressed on. Then I had a problem with a legal rep, David Singer of Deluxe Comics. He worked for me as an editor and as my legal rep. He coerced a letter of intent to contract from me [by saying] he would take the information on my future purchase and buy them himself with the confidential information.

But buy them I did, and when he failed to send the "check," I told him the deal was off...

But he showed part of the letter to Marvel and told them it was a "contract." Marvel, who would've licensed the Agents in '84, turned its back on them at that point for legal reasons. With DC Comics already having passed on doing a new series, I had to go to court.

When hit with the suit, get this, Singer formed Lodestone to do all his other comics from the same address, same office, with same people; but claimed it was a different company so when he lost, the assets might not be attached. What a guy?!? And, oh yeah, while he was telling his investors that (since his letter of intent had no validity) the Agents were public domain...he never went back and admitted to Marvel Comics he had no exclusive claim on them.

Three to four years later around late 1987/early 1988, I won the lawsuit against Deluxe Comics for violating my copyright on the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents. This led to the closing of the doors at Deluxe Comics. I received the rights to the books they published as well as cash. Deluxe was supposed to send me all the repro material from those books.

**CBM**: After the suit what happened with *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*?

**CARBONARO**: Well, Marvel, having been sold twice by then, no longer wanted them. I was about to sue some people for copyright violations but [was willing to] let most slide if they "talked to me." Apple Comics and I agreed the way to solve their printing of *ThunderBunny Meets the Agents* was to sign a contract recognizing my rights with a penalty for failure. I let Apple out of it three months early without that payment when it looked like they would miss deadline and George Carragone came along. He spent three years on it putting together some beautiful product with Texeria, Gulacy, Austin, Gibbons, Cullins and more. After his early death, Omni Comix (a sci-fi based comic) published one of those stories. Which brings us to DC Comics today doing the Archives.

**CBM**: How did DC get into the picture?

**CARBONARO**: Michael Uslan, an executive producer of the Batman movie, brought it back to DC. Paul Levitz was terrific enough to say yeah, DC would make the Agents fly again with merchandising and Archives. All I could say was Wow! First class!

Michael is a big fan of the Agents. He kept in contact with me for 17 years and felt he could make it happen with DC after his success with Stan Lee and the Just Imagine line they did. He was right. The Archives of the great stuff are now going to be part of the first class line of DC Comics

**CBM**: Michael Uslan? How'd you two get acquainted?

**CARBONARO**: I got involved with Michael during the lawsuit. Singer introduced him to me. Said we should sign a media contract that went to the winner of the lawsuit rather than wait years to see who wins. I said that if Singer was right and Tower's copyrights were not valid, then they don't need his signature now or later but they needed mine. They said they liked Singer's version of Raven's high tech weapons on his hands and a female Menthor. I pointed out that I did those prior to his books. Seems Singer didn't tell him he lifted that from my innovations when they agreed to a deal on a media contract.

I offered 10% to Singer for bringing about a deal, something I hated to do but felt it right and reasonable.

Singer wanted it all. Singer always talked about me refusing any settlements, but every one of his offers had this media contract of his attached. I couldn't take the offers, which would've given his company a chance to move on.

**CBM**: What's going to be in the Archives?
**CARBONARO**: The first four original 64-page Tower *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* comics from the sixties. There has only been a partial reprint of them since then, so we have Silver Age comics that have not seen print for over 30 years, courtesy of Paul Levitz, Michael Uslan and DC Comics.

**CBM**: Must be exciting!
**CARBONARO**: Sure, in a lot of ways, too. First, top guys in the ladder are committed to it out of desire as well as recognition of its value. Plus, as I mentioned, they are going to do the best possible version 30-plus years after the fact. Then older fans like me can get the whole collection, and new fans can see some of the Silver Age classics they weren't aware of by some of their favorite artists. Gotta love it.

**CBM**: What other T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents stuff is planned?
**CARBONARO**: A Dynamo statue based on the artwork of his creator, Wally Wood, is planned for a release in December. And DC is throwing a great promo on it. The statue is $149.99 but if you order it with the $49.99 Archive Volume One, the total for both is $175.00. You can see the statue on my website www.thunderagents.com. Oh, yeah, if you click on the photo, you'll see the whole statue. I have a great webmaster doing the site. His name is Walt Stone and his wife writes Harelquin novels as Allison Kent.

**CBM**: What other statues are planned?
**CARBONARO**: I hope they don't do one of T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agent NoMan when he's invisible. For now, the launch is the only thing being presented. If all goes well, I'm sure there will be a lot more!

**Curt Swan: A Life in Comics**
*Continued from page 29*

between Bob Oksner and Curt Swan. Besides the former inking the latter's pencils around the mid-'70s and briefly during the early '80s, one of Bob's dear friends, Dave Breger, was also one of Curt's fellow cartoonists years earlier on *Stars and Stripes*. Prior to Breger's death in 1970, Bob remembers meeting him once a week for lunch in New York, along with other artists making the rounds to sell their cartoons to various magazines. The group included Dick Wingert, the third cartoonist, along with Breger and Swan, who worked for *Stars and Stripes* while stationed in London. Curt and Dick were roommates during the war. Swan's dear friend Mort Walker attests to the fact that both men enjoyed going bowling and having a drink together for many years upon returning to the states. Incidentally, both Breger and Wingert originated cartoon soldiers (*Private Breger* and *Hubert*) who later made good in civilian life as strips for King Features.

In the mid-1970s when a fellow named Tex Blaisdell briefly inked Swan's pencils on *Superman* and *Wonder Woman* at DC, it was assumed that he was a young inker breaking into the business. Turns out he was an old pro, a journeyman artist. Two of his other credits included background inking on newspaper strips as diverse as Stan Drake's *The Heart Of Juliet Jones* and Bob Oksner's short-lived *Soozi*. Of course, the late Stan Drake also had ties to Curt, as his penciled portrait of Swan on the cover of *A Life In Comics* attests. Curt and Stan were golfing buddies whom, incidentally, were filmed in 1983 (along with a few other cartoonists) discussing their work. Unfortunately, the tapes never saw public distribution.

In his interview, Julius Schwartz reiterated what many of us knew, that comedian Jerry Seinfeld is a Curt Swan fan. On the *Larry King* show, Seinfeld stated that the animated Superman used in one of his American Express commercials was to be modeled after Curt's take on the character. Since 1997, I had tried to contact Jerry to find out why he found Swan's artwork appealing. Writing to his former network, NBC, and to the *Larry King* show garnered no response. My cousin, a Hollywood film editor, had her agent contact his agent. Another lead occurred when the friend of a television director thought he might see Mr. Seinfeld while the comedian was taping a special in Toronto. No success to date, but as has so often occurred during the course of this project, something good came from those efforts. Former *Seinfeld* sitcom writer David Mandel, a Swan fan himself, granted an interview for this issue of *CBM*.

## BEYOND COMPETENT

In *A Life In Comics*, insights were given by fellow artists to describe their attraction to Swan's work. For example, the fact that Curt could render anatomy correctly from all perspectives was discussed. Several people alluded to his

clear storytelling ability and to his attention to detail. Brian Bolland pointed out that the blank space near the tops of Swan's comic book covers gave the drawings an elegant, uncluttered look. Interestingly, Curt's peers chose not to use technical jargon to explain the quality of his penciling. As often as not, they sounded like laypeople who tapped into Swan's art on an emotional level, enjoying it as if they were "off the clock." At first I was disappointed, hoping to see more clearly through the trained eyes of these professionals. Later I understood. They were sharing feelings that went far beyond explaining why the work was merely competent. Dan Jurgens talked about Swan's attractive people, with whom he would like to associate. Mark Waid stated that Swan imbued his characters, even space aliens, with humanity. Jeff Weigel and others told how Curt could balance the loud and soft moments in drama. In the color section of the book, Arlen Schumer reminded us that Swan's Superman often exuded a feeling, not of melancholy or of brooding, but of solitude. Through his art, Curt somehow depicted a nobility and a spirituality in the fact that ultimately our burdens must be borne alone—our most important decisions must be made alone—even when other people are present.

While writing the book, there was a fear of becoming less enamored of the work after looking at thousands of Curt Swan comic book pages. Thankfully, that was not the case. Though as familiar and as mainstream as perhaps anything that's ever appeared in comic books, there remains an allure to Curt's drawings which keeps them vital. The reasons described in the previous paragraph go a long way toward explaining why

## ANOTHER EDITION?

After completing most of the research for *A Life In Comics*, some of the leading Superman historians were consulted, including those who'd spent years compiling data about The Man of Steel's various writers and artists. By confirming that they have little to add regarding Swan's career, my work is done—for now! It is hoped that *A Life In Comics* will spur others to share their insights about Curt's life and his art. If there is a next edition, any forthcoming information can be used to make it better.

**David Mandell**

*Continued from page 32*

wrote the one where Kramer becomes the movie phone guy. With Peter Melman, I wrote the episode that took place completely backwards. With Jeff Schaffer and Alec Berg I wrote the one where Kramer got the intern for Kramerica Industries. I wrote a bunch.

**Zeno**: What are your current projects?
**Mandel**: Mostly movie writing. I'm writing with those same guys, Jeff Schaffer and Alec Berg. We did a big rewrite on the Grinch movie. And now we're writing *The Cat In The Hat* movie.

**Zeno**: Did you and Jerry ever talk about specific comic stories or the artists and writers behind them?
**Mandel**: He was a huge fan of Curt Swan. And I believe he once told me one of his absolute favorite stories was Superman and Lex Luthor fighting toe-to-toe on the red sun planet [*Superman* #164, Oct 1963]. Of course, what I never actually told him was I collect original comic art and I found a page from that story. (Chuckle)

**Zeno**: I'll bet the page you bought is the only one I've ever seen for sale from that issue. It pictures the main fight scene where The Man of Steel gets a black eye before Luthor is kayoed.
**Mandel**: That's the page; it has a little water damage in the corner.

**Zeno**: Good for you.
**Mandel**: I absolutely love it. I'm a huge Swan fan and a big comic art collector, always looking for this stuff. So I have that page, which is beautiful, and I have a gorgeous splash page from a story where Lex Luthor and Superman are flying away from Ma and Pa Kent's house; Superman refers to Lex as his brother [*Superman* #175, Feb 1965]. And then the piece de resistance of my collection is the story from Superman Day where he's remembering how the initials L.L. are very important in his life—Bizarro comes and gives him Kryptonite and he's saved by the little leaguer ("L.L."); one of the very few examples of Bizarro art that survived [from the Silver Age: *Superman* #157, Nov 1962].

**Zeno**: Didn't you also get some of the later Dave Hunt-inked Swan pages featuring the Bizarro Justice League [*Superman* # 379, Jan 1983]? [**Author's Note:** Dave Hunt, who sold some of those pages directly to David Mandel, was kind enough to help me contact him for this interview.]
**Mandel**: Yeah, I have a bunch of those. There are actually two stories that I've been slowly trying to put together, though I basically sort of gave up because it was just too... and I think that Dave is still holding on to a bunch. So I'm not trying so hard anymore.

**Zeno**: You are obviously quite a fan.
**Mandel**: A big fan; I always remember that Bizarro stuff. I just loved it, and having written the episode it became somewhat of an obsession, I guess.

DOUBLE DYNAMITE FROM VANGUARD

LOOK! Up on the shelf,
it's a bird, it's a plane, no, it's
SUPERMAN!
Yes Superman and much
more in this career retrospec-
tive of
super-artist

*CURT SWAN*

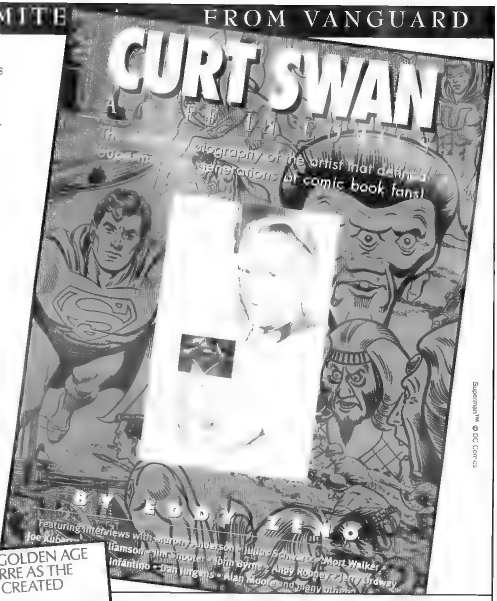
**Foreword by Mort Walker**

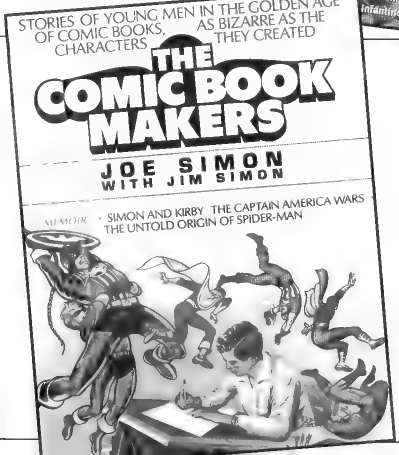
$34.95 Hardback
194 big pages • 360 illustrations

**$ 49.95 212 pg.**
**Deluxe signed Hardcover**
**with 16-pg. bonus**
**portfolio/index**
**SIGNED BY**
**Swan associates**
**MURPHY ANDERSON**
**& JULIUS SCHWARTZ**

Features interviews with notable comics professionals as Julius Schwartz, Carmine Infantino, Alan Moore, Dan Jurgens, Joe Kubert, Murphy Anderson *and more*

*add $6 s/h to: Vanguard*
*59-A Philhower Rd • Lebanon, NJ 08833*





STORIES OF YOUNG MEN IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMIC BOOKS, AS BIZARRE AS THE CHARACTERS THEY CREATED
THE COMIC BOOK MAKERS
JOE SIMON
WITH JIM SIMON
MEMOIR
SIMON AND KIRBY THE CAPTAIN AMERICA WARS
THE UNTOLD ORIGIN OF SPIDER-MAN

Legendary Comics Creator

# JOE SIMON *Tells All*

*DELUXE, Limited Edition*
*HC SIGNED by Joe Simon*
*w/16 page Bonus Portfolio $44.95*

*add $6 s/h to: Vanguard*
*59-A Philhower Rd • Lebanon, NJ 08833*
*creativemix.com/vanguard*

TM & © 2002 by Scott Shaw! CBM97:10

This funny animal comic featured many of the same characters as *Frisky Fables*. Stories featured in this funnybook include "Santa Claus Gets Help!" (with Neddy Bear); "Zany the Giraffe"; "The Great Attraction" (with Bill and Koo and a policeman swiped straight out of cartoonist/animator Preston Blair's classic "Animation" how-to book published by Walter Foster); "Icicle Ike" (a penguin) and "Inspector Klooz" (a detecting forefather of Inspector Clouseau, perhaps?). There's really nothing all that special inside this issue of *Holiday Comics*.

But oh, that *cover*!?! It's merely another masterpiece by the cartoonist-maestro of Oddball Comics covers, the great L.B. Cole, whose ability to create striking imagery is certainly showcased on this mind-blowing cover for *Holiday Comics*! Many current comics feature an artistic tendency to lavish excessive and pointless detail (usually to disguise otherwise rather substandard artwork), but here, Cole demonstrates his uncanny knack for adding *meaningful* detail to an image, unmatched by anyone this side of Will Elder or Geof Darrow! There's so much to look at here, you could study L.B.'s cover every day until *next* Christmas and you *still* wouldn't have seen it *all*! (So where the heck is Waldo?)

Here's a sincere Merry Christmas to all you "Oddball Comics" readers and your families!

**HOLIDAY COMICS** ISSUE NUMBER: 5 COVER DATE: January, 1952
PUBLISHER: Star Publications, Inc. COVER ARTIST: L.B. Cole

**ODDBALL Factoid:** The incredible proliferation of snowflakes on the cover of this issue of *Holiday Comics* reminds me of a funny story about legendary comic book artist Russ Heath. In the early 1980's, we both worked in Hanna-Barbera's layout department. Russ brought in some of his original comic art to sell, including some pages of *Planet of the Vampires*, a short-lived series for Atlas/Seaboard. Russ (an artist noted for his obsession with spotless detail) pulled out a particular piece that depicted a spaceship soaring though magnificently rendered space filled with hundreds of stars. "Notice anything special about this page?" Russ asked me. I was stumped; it was very nicely done, but I couldn't see anything unusual about it. "There's not a speck of white-out on this page," Russ said, with obvious pride. "I inked *around* all those stars!" (And you thought that I was obsessive!)

# THE Greatest COMIC BOOK ever!

## (well...for this CHRISTMAS at least)

by Mark Squirek

There is a big difference between Christmas at age 12 and Christmas at age 46. The details at age 12 are relatively easy—it's just about waiting. Nothing else. Wait for Christmas, wait for presents. Maybe you get something together for Mom and Dad, a couple of knick-knacks, but still, at age 12, you are just waiting.

For many, there is obviously the religious aspect to the holiday. However, for the purpose of this column, I am thinking more in the material world as opposed to the spiritual.

By age 46, Christmas has become a glorious day off from work. It is a reason to visit people you may only see once a year. (And you visit them so you can remind yourself why you only see them once a year.) It is meals and preparations and shopping and driving and money and cards and a million other details that obscure the real reason for the holiday. (Okay, there was just a hint of spirituality in that last sentence.)

Of all the modern Christmas stories, there is one that stands head and shoulders above the rest. Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* has withstood adaptation to almost every medium and still comes out on top. From movies (Hello, Alistair Sim) to television (Hello, Henry Winkler) and everything in between, the story is rock solid. It is a permanent part of the canon of Western Civilization. There are so many adaptations out there, that chances are you first heard the story in a format different than Mr. Dickens' original.

My first exposure to *A Christmas Carol* came through Mr. Magoo. Soon to be released on DVD, this time honored cartoon version is a holiday standard in my house. When I first saw it at age six or seven, it captured my imagination like nothing else at the time. It wasn't until comic books arrived in my life a couple of years later, at age eight, that I felt so personally attached to and fascinated by something.

What Mr. Magoo's cartoon version really did was to make me look for the story that his play was based on. My father helped me find it at the local library. He read it to me the first few years and by the time fourth grade rolled around, I knew the book by heart. I am not saying I understood it completely, I am saying that I loved it.

## A Christmas Happening

So one year, right before Christmas, my dad and I are in the James Book Store, in Parma, Ohio. I am in the comic section trying to find the latest DC titles, when, lo and behold, I see the strangest title on the cover of *Teen Titans* #13: "A Christmas Happening." Not only that, but the two figures at the front of the cover openly acknowledge the holiday in their greeting: "A Christmas Gift to you, Mr. Big" says one, "No Humbug this, Mr. Scrounge," says the other. The Titans, in a spotlight that creates the triangular feel of a Christmas tree, lay behind the men in a jumbled pile of garbage. This beautifully inventive take on the Christmas idea of the story is courtesy of Nick Cardy.

Many media try to stay current with trends and language. Television for example, jumps on any trend as quick as it can (i.e. The Monkees). Comic books are no exception. But in 1967 it was a lot harder to appear relevant and hip. Today, everything is almost instantaneous. Between MTV and the Web, even the most unhip of the unhip can put together a passable hip language. (Check out any youth orientated advertising for proof.) Without the benefit of MTV to help them stay current, the writers at DC had to depend on the news and magazines to see how kids were talking at the time. They took what they could find and added it to the mix of their #1 teen book of the time, *Teen Titans*. Quite often, the attempt to sound current didn't exactly work. While the slang that the Titans use for issue 13 isn't as bad as previous issues (anybody out there remember the "Mad Mod of Carnaby Street"?), it still sounds dated. Truth be told, it was dated the day it came out, but you have to give DC an "A" for effort. It certainly doesn't distract from Bob Haney's reworking of the Dickens' classic.

As the story opens on a snow covered hillside scene, the comfortable countryside vision is interrupted by something so small you have to hold the book real close to read it. It is a billboard with the following suggestion: "Watch Batman on ABC TV." This slight acknowledgement of reality is followed by something even better—the Titans are sitting around reading comic books!!! Aqualad is reading *Aquaman*, Wonder Girl is reading *Wonder Woman*, and Kid Flash, for some unfathomable reason, is reading *Superman*. The only Teen outside of the loop is Robin. He is sitting there reading the classic of classics, *A Christmas Carol*. Kid Flash starts off by asking Robin "How can you read that corny old tale?" Aqualad chimes in with his two-cents worth, "Check, Boy Wonder—Get with it! This Aquaman is cool, wet and wild. And that kid with him. He's dynamite!" After Wonder Girl adds her opinion, Robin gives in to the peer pressure and pulls out a copy of *Detective*

The story moves from the Titans to a scene on the outskirts of town, a place called "Junkorama." The name says it all. "Ebeneezer Scrounge PROP." It seems that Mr. Scrounge's assistant, one Mr. Ratchet, needs to buy an automatic wheelchair for his son. Now, for some reason, Mr. Scrounge has uncharacteristically dismissed Mr. Ratchet early. Unfortunately, right after he leaves, his son shows up for a surprise visit. What his son accidentally witnesses is smuggling activity at the Junkorama. He takes the information to his father and his father talks to Mr. Scrounge. Needless to say, Mr. Scrounge is outraged and denies it all. The son is sure of what he saw and, with his father's subsequent dismissal for inferring that Mr. Scrounge is a criminal, has no choice but to go to the Titans for help.

Haney has some real fun with Dickens. It turns out that Mr. Scrounge has a partner, Jacob Farley. Mr. Farley has escaped from prison, where he was as good as dead. What's even worse is that Mr. Scrounge had framed Mr. Farley and it's up to the Titans to come through.

The Titans, using Dickens as inspiration, decide to confront Mr. Scrounge in a highly original way. Each Titan takes a part in the *Christmas Carol* story. Kid Flash starts off as the Ghost of Christmas Past and Aqualad follows as the Ghost of Christmas Present. It is Wonder Girl, with a brand new Christmas-themed costume, who brings the story to its end with her Ghost of Christmas Future. At this point, the smugglers show up again.

Bob Haney's script supplies the fun, but it is Nick Cardy's art that supplies the excitement. Whenever the action heats

up the panels start to get a little crazy, almost jumping onto each other with excess energy and movement. By the time of the fight at the end of the story the panels are stacked triangles, naturally flowing into each other. He goes about as far outside the DC house style as someone could in 1967, yet it is still a solid DC book.

Hardly anyone out there needs to be told how the story ends. For the Titans, and the reader, it is one Marv Christmas and a Swinging Groovy New Year.

## Sugar and Spike and Everything

No matter what age you are, when you are a kid you know that adults simply just don't understand you. Sugar and Spike takes this idea to the literal extreme. They speak a language that only they understand. Grownups simply dismiss what they are hearing as baby gibberish. As the reader, we alone are privy to a translation of this "Baby Gibberish."

One day, while watching a home movie of interaction between his own children, Sheldon Mayer realized that his son and daughter were communicating between each other. While they seemed to understand each other, to everyone else, it sounded like gibberish. The only real problem for the children was that they did not know how to speak the same language as the adults. Why not show this previously hidden side to a child's life and provide the translation for adults so they can better understand their young ones?

What could have ended up a one-note joke in the hands of lesser talent becomes something that transcends space and time like no other continuously published comic book. Whatever Sheldon saw inside his own children that day led to the creation of a book that works on many levels, whether you are 5 or 95.

DC SPECIAL
PINT SIZE DO IT YOURSELF XMAS CARDS
SUGAR AND SPIKE
DON'T TOUCH 'EM! WHEN SOMEONE PUTS 1 NAIL HOLES THROUGH YOUR BRAND-NEW SOCKS-- YOU HIDE BEFORE YOU GET BLAMED!
125-YEAR-OLD GREAT-GREAT-GREAT GRAMPA PLUMM RETURNS
A COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH ADVENTURE!
READ ABOUT SPIKE'S COWBOY OUTFIT!

Just like so many of the super-hero comic books that we normally read, the cover of *Sugar and Spike* #68 involves rescue from imminent danger. Poor little Sugar is trying to save her good friend, Spike, from a serious "time-out." (For those of you who don't know what a "time-out" is, this is what parents now use to discipline their children. It replaced the previous methods of a) being sent to your room without supper, b) having to sit in a corner, facing the wall, until your parents are good and ready to deal with you and, of course, c) the antiquated method of child disciplining known as "spanking.")

All that Spike wants is to take a peek inside the Christmas stockings! If he can only reach the top of the fireplace! What treasures! A couple of candy canes, a duck, a stuffed panda and, best of all, the Batman and Robin action figures, complete with Batmobile accessory!

What else would a child want in 1966?

How about a visit from your Great-Great-Great Grampa to lively up your day? While enjoying an undeserved time out, Sugar and Spike are pleased as punch to see Grampa climb through the window. It seems he has recently escaped from the old age home and decided to come back to the house he built one hundred years ago. Naturally the parents are gravely concerned over his escape, but the energy of this old man, who stopped counting birthdays after his 125th, is phenomenal. He not only understands baby gibberish, allowing him to converse with Sugar and Spike but, when someone arrives from the old age home to take him back he overpowers them, escapes again and takes a job as a department store Santa!

What I loved about Sugar and Spike was their friendship. We should all be so lucky to have someone to relate to on such a trusting level. Among the many themes that float below the surface of this title (the individual against Society, lack of communication between adults and children, or the universal, "what time is lunch"), the most basic theme is one of trust. Can we learn to trust just one person in our life? Will they always be there for us?

As a ten year old, I had been secretly enjoying *Sugar and Spike* for about a year. Publicly acknowledging my fondness for these little tykes was not a particularly healthy idea on the playground of St. Richard's Elementary School. Consequently, back issues were easy to find. Whenever I found some during a trade, I only had to claim they were for my younger sister, Marilu, and everything was OK.

## THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS BOOK EVER

The Christmas theme of #68 always set it apart. When my comics reading eventually gave way to other hobbies, I kept this issue until I went into the service at 17. I read it every year, right after watching *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and right before reading Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. From the slapstick hi-jinks with Grampa in the department store to the final page where we find out Grampa owns the store, this story was a holiday tradition in my own head. (The only missing element from my yearly Christmas ritual was *Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol*—you never knew when it would be on. As a matter of fact, it just flat-out disappeared for a few years there. Of course, back than, Christmas didn't really begin until you had seen Santa sliding across the hills on a Norelco Triple Header Electric Razor!)

Even without *Sugar and Spike*, Sheldon Mayer's place in the pantheon of comic creators would still be secure. His story starts at the very beginnings of comic book history. He was a vocal supporter of Superman before *Action* #1 saw print. As an editor for All-American Comics in the thirties, he oversaw the starts of Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Wildcat and The Flash. The choices he made when hiring new artists and writers were instrumental in defining what comics became over the next few decades (his decision to give 17-year old Carmine Infantino a job ultimately determined the next 30 years of DC Comics history).

First published in 1956, *Sugar and Spike* continued on a regular basis until issue #98 (cover dated Oct-Nov 1971). In 1999, DC published a previously unseen story as part of their *Silver Age* series. Published as issue #99, it should be available at any comics convention for a good price. There was also a facsimile edition of #1 and that should still be available for order from your local comics shop. The number of *Sugar and Spike* fans out there would surprise you. They are there if you look for them (maybe there are a few people who just can't publicly come to terms with loving such a fun book, or are still afraid of the bullies on the playground at St. Richards Elementary School).

Sheldon Mayer's biography is available from many, many sources. Take a second to run a search for his name online. There are several wonderful websites that feature his work. If you prefer the more traditional methods, take a second to search out Carmine Infantino's highly enjoyable biography, or check out *Comic Between the Panels* published by Dark Horse Comics. The latter is a tremendous encyclopedia-type reference book that looks at comic history across the board, from the creators, to the vendors, to the battles that have been fought. (Again, both books are available for order from your local comic shop.)

No matter what decisions he made as an Editor for All-American Comics, it is the time and care that he put into the original 98 issues of *Sugar and Spike* that sets him apart from every other creator in comics. What a big heart.


COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

# BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT!

## These issues are available...

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| #52 | Archie, All-Star, Schwartz Part III, Fox | $8 |
| #58 | Lost in Space, Weisinger, Basil Wolverton! | $10 |
| #60 | Planet Comics & Reed Crandall | $10 |
| #65 | Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane & more! | $10 |
| #66 | Women of the Spirit, Batman & Raven! | $8 |
| #72 | Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I | $8 |
| #73 | Warren Horror, Larry Lieber Part II | $8 |
| #74 | Gil Kane, Green Lantern, Gerber Sticker Set #2 | $15 |
| #76 | Rocky & Bullwinkle, Poe, Wolverton | $8 |
| #79 | Blue Beetle, Fred Guardineer, Capt. Action | $8 |
| #83 | Magnus, Saturn Girl, Plastic Man | $8 |
| #84 | Morrow, Ditko, Romita Sr., Brainiac | $8 |
| #85 | Eisner, Manning, Whitman Mystery Part I | $8 |
| #86 | Perez Part I, Bronze Age, Whitman Mystery Part II | $8 |
| #87 | George Evans, Detectives Inc. | $8 |
| #88 | Murphy Anderson, Rudolph | $8 |
| #89 | Hal Foster, Frank Cho, Perez Part II | $8 |
| #90 | Patriotic issue, Bob Lubbers, Perez Part III | $8 |
| #91 | Johnny Craig, Harry "A" Chesler | $8 |
| #92 | Joe Kubert, Eddie Stanky, Mary Worth | $8 |
| #93 | Alex Raymond, Flash Gordon, Gail Simone | $8 |
| #94 | GA Green Lantern, Spectre, Perez Wrap-up | $8 |
| #95 | Disney strip art, Miracleman | $8 |
| #96 | Milton Caniff, Marc Hempel | $8 |
| Sp #5 | Spider-Man, Gerber Sticker Set #8 | $12 |

**Prices include postage.**
**Add $2 each for overseas orders.**
**MD (5%) and MO (6.975%) add sales tax.**
**MasterCard, Visa orders call 800-322-7978.**

**CBM Back Issues**
**PO Box 469**
**West Plains MO**
**65775-0469**

# BOOK REVIEW BY PAUL GRAVETT

© 2002 PAUL GRAVETT

Once, a Superman walked among us. From the testimonies in this book, it seems I am not the only child of the Sixties who believes that it was Curt Swan (1920-1996), more than any other artist, who brought out the man in the Man of Tomorrow. Swan's artwork contributed hugely to making Krypton's last son in exile, the alien in our midst, into someone like us, who would think and feel as well as act, who was approachable, big-hearted, considerate, maybe physically super-powerful yet gentle, noble yet subtly tragic. Under Swan's sensitive pencil, Superman became as human as the rest of us, and won not just our awe and admiration, but our affection and sympathy.

In Eddy Zeno's lovingly compiled tribute (a companion to Cardy, Foster, Infantino and Simon in the series of essential Vanguard Career Retrospectives), Curt Swan, always the modest, hard-working craftsman, finally gets some of the praise he deserves from family, writers, editors, inkers, fans, bosses and army, golfing and comics friends for his nearly fifty years of artwork for the Superman Family of comic books, from his first attributed one-off story in *Superman* #51 in March-April 1948 to his five pages published posthumously in the 1996 *Superman: The Wedding Album*.

Before and after Swan, Superman's physique and facial appearance have gone through many transformations over the years and are changing still. His co-creators, writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster, were the first to conjure Superman into four-color life. Wayne Boring developed a distinct styling that supplanted Shuster's for several years from the early Fifties. Boring's Superman is much loved by many, but to my boyhood eyes could appear awkward and mannequin-like at times, striking poses and flying stiff-limbed, with the barrel-shaped torso of a weightlifter. More naturalistic than Boring's interpretation were the Superman covers and daily strips drawn by Win Mortimer. Zeno (his surname even sounds like a Sixties Superman alien!) explains that when Mortimer left DC in 1956 for a time to concentrate on his own strip, *David Crane*, this paved the way for Swan, his ideal successor, to rise to the position of the principal Superman artist by the early Sixties.

Zeno charts this ascendancy in a thorough 45-page career overview that opens the book, starting in 1945 with Swan's initial connection to DC via his army buddy, DC writer Eddie 'France' Herron, with whom he had worked at the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper. Swan's first DC assignments published from 1946 were on Simon and Kirby's kid gangs Boy Commandos and Newsboy Legion. These were followed by SF back-up Tommy Tomorrow from 1948, inked by John Fischetti, another of Swan's pals from his army days, who went on to win a Pulitzer prize for his political cartooning, and the radio and TV crime drama *Gangbusters*. Swan was proving himself a versatile and valuable addition to DC's roster.

Swan always felt that his first meaningful Superman assignment was the one-shot *Three-Dimension Adventures* of Superman in 1953, and that his breakthrough came with the assignment to *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen*, given his own title in 1954. Following Win Mortimer's departure from DC, Swan took on his roles, drawing the daily *Superman* strip from June 18, 1956 through November 12, 1960 (a body of work that cries out to be properly reprinted in book form), and a year later becoming the cover penciler for the entire Superman family of comic books. As Zeno concludes, "It can be argued that history also needs to be rewritten in terms of when he became a primary Superman artist...Curt attained that status by 1957, not 1962 as is generally noted."

It was 1962, however, which Zeno identifies as the start of no less than four 'zeniths' through Swan's career. The three years from 1962 to 1964 encompass the classic two- and three-part novels edited by Weisinger and inked by George Klein such as the poignant Imaginary Tales, "The Death of Superman" written by Jerry Siegel and "The Amazing Story of Superman-Red and Superman-Blue" written by Leo Dorfman. According to Zeno, Swan's second zenith spans the "Swanderson" years, teaming him with another of his greatest inkers, Murphy Anderson, on the landmark 1971 revamp of the hero under editor Julie Schwartz and new young writers Denny O'Neill (a surprising omission from the book's interviewees), Elliott S! Maggin and Len Wein, with Cary Bates. The third zenith reflects his mature late period around the time of the touching two-issue "last Superman story" written by Alan Moore in 1986 that drew to a close the Silver Age firmament, wiped away for John Byrne's reinvention. Zeno perceives Swan's fourth zenith covering his private commissions from the mid-Eighties, several of which are shown here, which bloomed as his published work dwindled until his death in 1996. On these he would ink his own pencils, then color them too, finally returning to penciling alone but with a still greater mastery of shading and detail.

Swan was famously unpretentious and unassuming; the last thing he would want to go on about was himself and his art. So, instead, at the heart of this book are the 100 pages of interviews, commentaries and correspondence from thirty-seven of Swan's many admirers, from army cohort Andy Rooney, editor Julius Schwartz and Legion of Super-Heroes writer Jim Shooter to Swan's favorite inker Al Williamson and writer-artists Dan Jurgens and John Byrne. Their cumulative effect is to get to the

true nature of this man and this artist.

Zeno has talked to Swan's ex-wife, his son and two daughters and learned how he would always give his family time and attention while working from home and how his flexible approach, averaging three days on and four days off, playing golf if the weather was fine or helping his children with their homework, sometimes forced him to work for long stretches into the small hours to meet his deadlines, puffing on his cigarettes. We learn that the artwork didn't always come easily to him; there would be dry periods, so at other times, when the drawing was flowing, he would push himself harder than ever. Amazingly, apart from a few months of night classes under the G.I. Bill, Swan was entirely self-taught from studying anatomy books and applying himself.

When it came to his original artwork, it turns out that, like many comic book journeymen of his time, Swan was pretty cavalier about keeping any for himself. He had no problem that much of it used to be given away to readers as letter column prizes and he gave a lot of it away himself for charitable causes. But one story meant a lot to him, one of the few he both penciled and inked. He made a point of giving everyone in the family a page from the story "I Flew With Superman" from *Superman Annual* #9, 1983, in which Swan himself appears and helps the Man of Steel solve a case. Family tales like these tell us so much.

Swan speaks for himself here as well, in three short concluding interviews with Raul Wrona, one in person from 1986, two by phone from 1996. It's here that Swan confirms that Weisinger's editorial bullying forced him to quit comics around 1951. "I was getting terrible migraine headaches and had these verbal battles with Mort. So it was emotional, physical. It just drained me and I thought I'd better get out of here before I go whacko." He was soon back, though, because the advertising work didn't pay enough to support his family. Zeno notes, "The headaches went away after he gained Weisinger's respect by standing up to him." Swan also tried pitching a strip for syndication around 1954, *Yellow Hair*, about a blond boy raised by Native Americans, four samples of which are shown here, but it never sold. Of course, there were other times when Swan could get frustrated with DC, and later he was offered deals to switch to Marvel, but he stayed loyal to the end as the benefits were good and the work steady. Or at least it was, until his style went out of fashion.

In 1967 Boring had been unceremoniously fired by Weisinger without notice. Swan was never fired, but he was taken off the monthly Superman books for 1986's relaunch and for a time, for too long, towards the end, his assignments were drying up. Nevertheless, Swan did enjoy some "swan songs" including his "pseudo-Sunday page" Superman center spreads for *Action Comics Weekly*, his runs on *Aquaman* and back on *Superboy* again, and prestige specials like *Superman: The Earth Stealers*.

To me, one of the most moving tributes comes from Elliott S! Maggin, barely twenty in 1971 when he started scripting Superman for Swan, thirty years his senior. As he puts it, "divide and conquer was a widely respected management technique," and Maggin avoided Swan after he was told that Swan wanted to "throttle" him for the elaborate digressions in his scripts. But in the mid-Eighties, towards the end of their time working apart, they got to hang out over "a little libation" and they found that, "We were both philosophical products of the message we spent a career delivering to the hero-worshippers of the world. We both believed in truth, justice and the American Way: a personal Torah. It was good finally to learn that we had so much in common when finally we gave each other the space to reveal it." And in a typically perceptive interview, Alan Moore muses about Swan: "I'd like to have asked him how much he identified with Superman, how much of himself he put in there. I feel that he probably did on some private level; that there was some sort of a moral strength that he aspired to, that he drew into those figures. Something almost indefinable, but some essence of himself..." I am sure Moore is right; I can see something of Superman in every photo of Swan in this book and in so many descriptions of the depth and decency of Swan's character.

Throughout this book are some genuine insights into Swan's understated but sophisticated approach to comic book art. In his sixteen-page color Gallery, writer and designer Arlen Schumer highlights Swan's greatest characters and strengths. On one spread of faces, he praises his depictions of "the spectrum of human emotion, from agony to anger, mournful to mirthful." On another he shows examples of his landscapes "whose melancholy stillness evoked those of early 20th century surrealist painter Giorgio de Chirico," while another underlines his point about Superboy growing up in Smallville having an "unmistakable Rockwellian appeal." Fittingly his last page compiles some of the recurrent Superman imagery of statues, monuments and memorials, which "show an artist whose style mirrored his name, that of a swan itself, graceful and dignified, yet strong and resolute, permeated with an air of solemnity." Schumer has become quite brilliant at distilling and displaying the fundamentals of a comic artist.

In summation in the closing pages, Zeno joins Schumer, Wrona and Stern in observing that Swan's striving for realism, his inspiration from the classical illustrators, the appealing clarity, warmth and truly American subjects of his drawing, make him "the Norman Rockwell of the Comics" and like Rockwell he is overdue for far greater appreciation. To that end, this book itself is a monument to the grace and dignity of Swan's work and life. ⓒ

**Vanguard Productions, Trade Paperback $19.95, Hardcover $34.95, Limited Edition Deluxe $49.95 (signed by Julius Schwartz and Murphy Anderson with an additional Swan Index by Ray Wrona)**

## FUNNIES FARRAGO

*[continued from page 19]*

doing color covers for Hearst's Sunday *American*, alternating with Held and Nell Brinkley. He was making $2,000 a week and living the high life of the big city. One day Patterson and a friend were having lunch in the Madison Hotel dining room when a dignified-looking older man wearing a high collar shirt walked over to their table and stuck out his hand.

"You're Russell Patterson," the man said, "and I'm Charles Dana Gibson. I've been trying to meet you for months to tell you I'm crazy about those little girls of yours."

And so the mantle passed from the delineator of one generation's ideal of feminine beauty to the maker of the next's iconography. Patterson's girls were to the 1920s what Gibson's had been to the 1890s. Considered a connoisseur of feminine embonpoint, Patterson was invited to serve on the jury for the Miss America competition, a sentence he served until 1945. And Patterson's girls set a standard for the illustrators and cartoonists of the era, influencing not only their endeavors but the perception of fashionable beauty by the public at large and women's clothes designers, too.

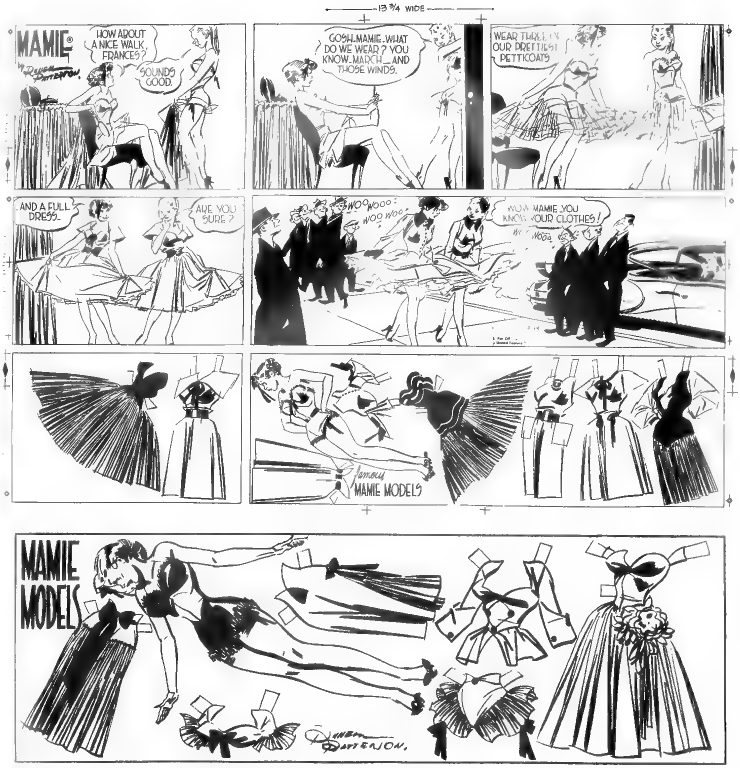
Long a juror with the Miss America pageant, Patterson here limned Jean Bartel of California, who was Miss America in 1943.

An example of Patterson's stunning use of solid black and his skill as a caricaturist. Although some of these have, by now faded from memory, they are, left to right: Prince of Wales, Beatrice Lillie, Beau Jeste, Herbert Hoover, Dolores del Rio, Paul Whiteman, Helen Morgan, Will Rogers, Mr and Mrs Calvin Coolidge, Mayor Jimmy Walker, Betty Compton, H.L. Mencke Grover Whalen, Al Smith, Helen Kane, Alexander Woollcott.

Patterson did covers and illustrations for every major magazine of the day, including a 1931 newcomer called *Ballyhoo*, a sort of outhouse version of the more sophisticated *Life* humor magazine Gibson was editing in its final days. Patterson joined *Ballyhoo*'s editor, Norman Anthony, in producing a musical revue called "Ballyhoo of 1932." Patterson designed the sets and costumes. It wasn't his first foray into the theater—he'd done the costumes for "The Gang's All Here" the year before—but this earlier enterprise flopped, and "Ballyhoo" ran for 95 performances (and introduced Bob Hope in his first role other than chorus boy).

Patterson did magazine and newspaper illustration throughout the decade and also did costume and set design, working for various stretches in Hollywood. A dapper dresser with an elegant profile, he even appeared in one of the movies he worked on—in *Artists and Models* in 1937, as himself. He also created a variation on his statuesque beauty—a buxom dumb blonde in three dimensions. She was a marionette, and she and her supporting cast appeared in various showcases in New York through the thirties as the "Patterson Personnettes." While producing these shows, Patterson met Ruth Cleary, a composer, whom he married in 1938.

Patterson expanded upon his costuming career to create women's fashions. During World War II, he had designed the uniform for the WAACs (Women's Auxiliary Army Corps), and after the War, he formed Pattikins, a company that produced clothing for girls and teenagers. He put his set designing experience to use in creating superclubs, theaters, hotel lobbies, even the interiors of trains. And his engagement in the performing arts gave him the idea to turn Ellis Island into an amusement park, and while that didn't go


13 3/4 WIDE
MAMIE©
HOW ABOUT A NICE WALK, FRANCES?
SOUNDS GOOD.
GOSH, MAMIE, WHAT DO WE WEAR? YOU KNOW, MARCH... AND THOSE WINDS.
WEAR THREE OF OUR PRETTIEST PETTICOATS
AND A FULL DRESS.
AVE YOU SURE?
WOO WOO!
WOW MAMIE, YOU KNOW YOUR CLOTHES!
MAMIE MODELS
MAMIE MODELS

(above) **Mamie**, Patterson's Sunday comic strip from the 1950s. (below) A paper doll panel from the strip.

anywhere, two similar projects, Storyland Village in Ashbury Park, New Jersey, and Enchanted Forest in Old Forge, New York, materialized in the 1950s.

Patterson turned to unabashed cartooning on July 16, 1950, with the Sunday comic strip *Mamie*. A model by profession (although often working as a sales clerk or waitress, like many would-be models of the day), Mamie was a more zaftig version of her flapper antecedents, and Patterson now wielded his brush more extensively than before, beefing up his lines as well as spotting solid blacks. The comedy, however, as Ron Goulart observes, never equaled the drawing. "Like many illustrators, Patterson was not an especially strong gag writer." But then, Patterson was not, strictly speaking, a cartoonist.

Except for the five-year stint with Mamie, his life, which he spent almost constantly drawing since 1914, was spent as an illustrator. His artwork often appeared with the work of cartoonists in magazines and newspapers, and his medium, pen and ink in black-and-white for the most part, was a cartoonist's medium. And he was one of the founding members of the National Cartoonists Society. (It was he whose unrelenting urging finally persuaded Rube Goldberg, then the profession's most influential Grand Old Man, to convene the formative meeting March 1, 1946.)

Thus, by association, Patterson was a cartoonist. And he drew such exquisite cartoon-like pictures that I'd love to claim him as one of the clan. But he was an illustrator, one of surpassing skill whose drawings had such great verve and wit that they gave their era a show business aura. He died March 17, 1977, having created with his pen and brush great vistas of the imagination, many of which became palpably, theatrically, real.

But not his women. His women are to dream on, then and still.

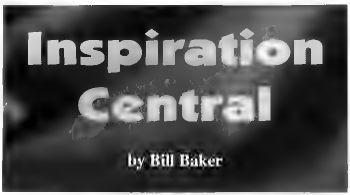
And next time, if we can get boots astride a saddle, or vice versa, and the round-up doesn't wind down and turn stardust into trail dust, we'll hop along to the distant vistas of the Old West and New, where bailin' wire meets the sunset and a cowhand's best friend is a silver bullet and a galvanizing "Hi, yo, away we go."

**"Can I show you anything, sir?"**

Stunning use of solid blacks and textures, here, for the humor magazine **Life** in 1929.

# Storyteller: Jim Shooter

## on His Comic Book, and Other, Influences



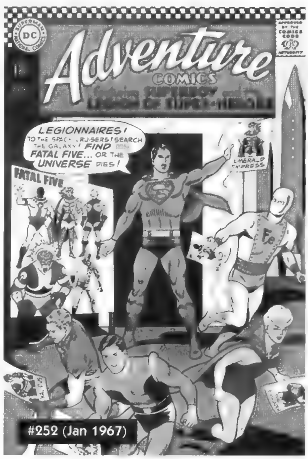

*Say what you will about him, but Jim Shooter has certainly been one of the more influential folks to have worked in comics during the past 50 years or so. Putting aside his creative work, a rich vein of action-adventure tales that cuts across the landscape of modern comics history from DC to Marvel, Valiant to Defiant and beyond, he would qualify for notice due to his business acumen and editorial leadership alone. And when you add in his considerable library of creative work, which includes significant runs on such stalwart series as Legion of Super-Heroes, Secret Wars and Avengers, as well as wonderful new books like* Harbinger *and* Warriors of Plasm, *you know that he's repeatedly proven to be a writer of rare and lasting abilities. And, although he's recently shifted his creative focus to other media for the most part, his life-long love of comics and quality storytelling remains strong.*

*Jim took a few moments to share his memories of discovering comics, and to describe how these early encounters hooked him for life. He also provides some insight into the other folks who inspired him to set pen to page, and embark on his own adventures in the storytelling business.*

**Comic Book Marketplace:** When did you discover comics, and what drew you to that medium?

**Jim Shooter:** I was born in 1951, just to set the comics era for you, and comics were everywhere. In those days every supermarket had comics, every drug store had comics, every place you went there were racks of comics. And so it was the most common thing in the world for kids to have comics, or their parents to buy them comics, unlike today, where it requires a special trip to the comic shop.

So I'd go along to the supermarket with my mother, and whine and fuss until she bought me a comic book. Generally, it was one of the Donald Duck comic books, or *Superman*, or *World's Finest*. Sometimes a cover would catch my eye. This was before I could read, and we would go home and she would read them to me. She would point to the words as she read them and so, after a while, when mommy wasn't around, I could read them myself. I'd gotten used to the concept of reading. So, well before I went to grade school, I was reading comics and reading words like "invulnerable" and "teletype" with no problem. Which is funny. Once you get a kid hooked on reading, they'll read everything from soup cans and cereal boxes or whatever. So I was sort of this voracious comics reader for a while.


DC
Adventure
COMICS
LEGIONNAIRES! TO THE SOLAR SYSTEM'S EDGE IN SEARCH OF A CURE FOR A FATAL FIVE... OR THE UNIVERSE DIES!
FATAL FIVE
#252 (Jan 1967)

Then, I guess when I was about seven or eight, they all started seeming the same. They were all very much alike. Superman was always worried about Lois Lane discovering his secret identity, and that seemed to be about it. And I thought, "If I was writing these stories...." [Laughter]

Anyway, so I quit reading comics. I picked them up again right around the time these newfangled Marvel comics came out, '61 or '62. Of course, the Marvel comics were just

revolutionary in the context of that time. Marvel comics had stories that were thoughtful. The characters behaved more credibly. I mean, people look at these old comics now, and they think, "He thinks this is credible?" But, in the context of the time, it was remarkable. I'd never seen a hero wash his costume before, catch a cold before, or anything like that. That was all happening in Marvel comics, and now it's such standard procedure, that no one even realizes there ever was a revolution.

Anyway, I got involved with Marvel. As I said, I thought, "Oh, comics have gotten great! I can't wait to see Superman." Then I checked Superman, and it was the same old stuff. Superman comics were still pretty much just the same as they always were. And that, of course, is how I got started writing. I thought, "Gee, if I could write these Superman stories as well as this Stan Lee guy writes these Marvel stories, I could probably sell them!" And that's what I did. I didn't write them as well as Stan, but I tried. [General laughter]

**CBM:** It almost sounds as if Stan might have been as big an influence, if not bigger, on your writing than a lot of the DC writers, then.

**Shooter:** It's funny. Retroactively, the DC writers became a great influence. Because at that time, I would say that Stan was the number one influence. And I, as I said, had been a voracious reader, so by the time I got to be 13 years old, I was a huge Mark Twain fan, and Jules Verne and H. G. Wells fan. Basically, I would read my sister's schoolbooks, and she was three years older than me. So I was reading Shakespeare. I was a reading machine. So all these other things I was reading influenced me as well— especially Mark Twain.

But I used to think, "Oh, the DC comics of the '50s. Garbage!" Well, I went back and read some of them, and you know what? The guys who wrote them were not hip, like Stan, and they weren't necessarily revolutionary, like Stan, but some of those stories were *great*! And the construction of the stories! These guys were pros. They knew what they were doing. Otto Binder. Edmond Hamilton. John Broome. When you take the stories apart, when you become a sophisticated enough writer to pick a story apart, and you pick those things apart, they are riveted together so solidly. The first Bizarro story is great. The first Brainiac story? It's great. It's a great story. The first Metallo story. I mean, some of these stories were just *wonderful* stories, like little movies. And the trouble was that the guys, like I say, were not hip. So the characters' dialogue was a little stilted, and they weren't revolutionary thinkers.

They were doing a job. They were doing what they were told to do by very stodgy editors, some of whom I worked for, editors who thought that there was a formula and you stick to the formula, and that's it. Stan's whole idea was, "Throw the formula away; let's see what we can do here."

It's really funny. What I found was that everything Stan told me, and I worked very closely with Stan for a long time, the things he'd say to me were often *exactly* the same things that Mort Weisinger, editor at DC, would say to me. Often in the same words. So these guys came from the same school. They learned the same mechanics, but the thing is Stan was trying to reach out to an older audience, trying to be hip and current, and Mort wanted the world to stay locked in 1954. And that's the difference.

**CBM:** You've mentioned a few names that aren't typically associated with comic books these days, but the one that particularly sticks out is Twain. How did Twain influence you?

**Shooter:** I started reading Mark Twain's stuff when I was very young, and what I found with him was his language was sometimes very direct, and yet there was more *content* on every page, there was more to think about than with almost anybody else's stuff. And I started understanding that you weren't necessarily just writing down on the paper what Muse was putting in your ear. You

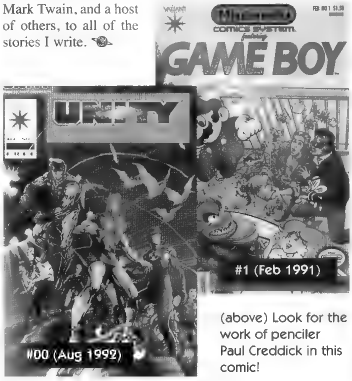
had something to say, or why were you doing this? So he really sort of enlightened me about literature.

You know, if you're in high school, and the English teacher is talking about literature, it's just the most tedious thing in the world. Until a little light bulb comes on, and you see it, and you say, "*That's* what they're trying to say! And they're garbling it up here in the classroom, but *this* is what they're talking about!" And then you realize it's something very cool. Writing is architecture as well as art.

If you have all of the action and the interest, but you have something to say—I'm not talking about a moral, or a morality play—I'm just saying there's a *subject* to the story. What is it I have to say about this subject? Do I have *anything* to say about it? [Laughter] And if you do have something to say, that subtext can make a piece meaningful. In Twain's case, timeless. For a thousand years, people are going to be learning about the equality of man from *Huckleberry Finn*. And, OK, that's not likely to happen with all my comic book stories. *But*, what I found is, when I was a kid and I was reading some of those Stan Lee stories, there'd be little moments that would stick with me, to this day. Something that a character said, or some incident that occurred, just the way that Stan handled it, and it meant something. It touched me personally. Maybe I learned something, right?

Well, I would love it if that ever happened with one of my stories. Because that's why I try.

But I sure ain't Mark Twain, and I don't know if I ever got to the point where I could shine Stan's shoes. But that clarified the mission for me. And I try to apply all the things that I learned from Mark Twain, and a host of others, to all of the stories I write.




(above) Look for the work of penciler Paul Creddick in this comic!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

ADVERTISING RATES

FULL PAGE AD
(7 1/8" WIDE X 9 5/8" TALL)
$400.00

HALF PAGE HORIZONTAL
(7 1/8" WIDE X 4 5/8" TALL)
$300.00

THIRD PAGE VERTICAL
(2 1/4" WIDE X 9 1/4" TALL)
$235.00

QUARTER PAGE
(4 5/8" WIDE X 3 3/4" TALL)
$190.00

BIG/LITTLE AD
(BUSINESS CARD 3 1/2" WIDE X 2" TALL)
$100.00

Above rates are for black & white camera-ready ads. Include payment with ad copy and forward to the address below. The ad deadline is the 10th. Rate Card and further information available upon request

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE
PO BOX 469
WEST PLAINS, MO 65775

CONTACT CBM ADVERTISING
800-322-7978
FAX 417-256-5555

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

12 issues for $60
Mail check or MO payable to:
GEMSTONE PUBLISHING
PO BOX 469
WEST PLAINS, MO 65775

MasterCard or VISA orders call:
800 322 7978

MO residents add 6.975% state tax
MD residents add 5% state tax

Foreign subscriptions: Canada/Mexico $62, Great Britain/France/Norway/Germany/Western Europe $110, Japan/Singapore/Philippines/Australia/Asian Pacific Rim $120 (all US funds)

# Earth Needs Moore Women!

## Collectable Character Statues

by Mike Wilbur

In the vast universe of character statues, sculptor **Clayburn Moore** is the undisputed master of the female form.

From 1994's rendering of **Billy Tucci's Shi**, through Moore's latest offering, **Michael Turner's Fathom**, and beyond, Moore transforms two-dimensional comic book heroines into three-dimensional works of art with a power, presence, and sensuality that few in the field can approach, much less match.

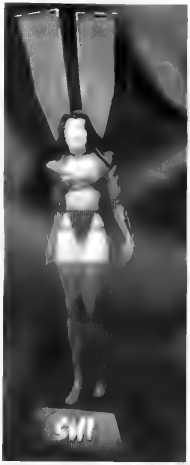
A classically trained sculptor, Moore studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, Italy. He worked in fine-art bronzes, before turning his attention to the sculpting of the comic book and fantasy characters he had grown up with.

To establish a presence in the industry, he solicited and accepted projects from a variety of established studios and publishers, before incorporating **Moore Creations** in 1994.

One of Moore's earliest female comic character sculpts was **J.J. Sachs**, costar of the 1993-94 Epic Comics series *Sachs & Violens*. Commissioned, financed, and sold via mail order by series co-creators Peter David and George Perez, J.J. Sachs was sculpted by Clayburn Moore and produced by **Bowen Designs** in an edition of only 500 [illegible] all we could afford to make," according to Peter David in the letters page of *S&V* #3).

Another pre-Moore Creations piece was **Hannah and the Sabretooth**, from **Mark Schultz**'s *Xenozoic Tales*. Hannah was produced in both fully-painted resin and paint-simulated bronze.

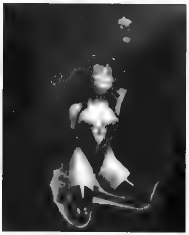
With the establishment of his own studio, Moore went to work securing licensing deals. He pitched some projects, others were brought to him. The pre-




**Shi** created by William Tucci

**Vampirella** created by Forrest J. Ackerman for Warren Publications

Hannah and the **Sabretooth** created by Mark Schultz in **Xenozoic Tales**



**J.J. Sachs** created by Peter David & George Perez in **Sachs & Violens**

**Witchblade** created by David Wohl & Michael Turner

**The Princess** from the painting by Frank Frazetta

**Nemo Girl** created by Clayburn Moore

Xena, as portrayed by Lucy Lawless in the popular TV series

dominance of female characters among his subjects just seemed to be a natural flow. The more he produced, the more he was asked to produce. One needs only look at one of his female character pieces to know why.

In the mid-90s, Moore approached legendary artist **Frank Frazetta** with a proposal to translate some of Frazetta's paintings into three-dimensions. A natural team-up, given Frazetta's mastery of two-dimensional renderings of the female form.

After some initial reluctance (owing to some past unsatisfactory experiences), Frank and Ellie Frazetta selected the figure of the **Princess**, from Frank's cover-painting for **Edgar Rice Burroughs**' *A Fighting Man of Mars*, as a sort of "audition" for Moore, to demonstrate that he had what it took prior to tackling a more difficult subject.

The Princess was a phenomenal success, produced initially in bronze, with a follow-up version in cold-cast porcelain. The Frazettas were so pleased with the results, that Moore was licensed to sculpt a full statue based on Frank's cover painting for *Conan the Adventurer* (although, for complex licensing reasons, the actual finished piece had to be titled and marketed as "Frazetta's **Barbarian**").

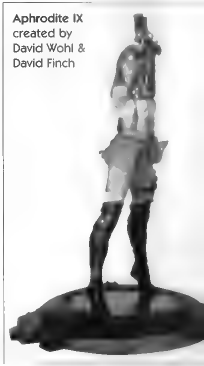
Meanwhile, along the way, Moore aligned himself with an assortment of smaller comics publishers (**DC Comics** has their own in-house studio in **DC Direct**, and **Bowen Designs**, at the time, had a lock on the **Marvel Comics** license) to produce works based on their rosters of characters.

Moore Creations produces a large range of busts and statues for **Top Cow Studios**, home of **Witchblade** and others, as well as enjoying long-term associations sculpting characters from David Mack's **Kabuki**, Terry Moore's **Strangers in Paradise**, and TV's **Buffy the Vampire Slayer**.

Among the female character pieces produced by Moore Creations to date are full-size and mini-statues of **Lady Death** (from the now-defunct **Chaos Comics**); a full-size statue of Tucci's Shi, a mini-statue and a series of busts from Mack's Kabuki; two busts and a pending statue from Strangers in Paradise; full-size and mini **Vampirella** statues; two busts, a mini-statue, and a series of resin ornaments from Buffy the

(left) **Fathom** created by David Wohl & David Finch
(above) **Fathom** Previews Exclusive variant

**Scarab** created by David Mack in Kabuki



Aphrodite IX created by David Wohl & David Finch

(left) **Kabuki** created by David Mack
(below) **Snapdragon** created by David Mack in **Kabuki**

Vampire Slayer; a bust of Lucy Lawless as **Xena, Warrior Princess**; and two variants and an ornament of Frazetta's Princess.

Moore has also released a wide assortment of statues, mini-statues and busts of characters from Marc Silvestri's Top Cow Studios. These include **Fathom** (in two variant full-size statues), Witchblade (two full-size statues—one with three variants, a mini-statue, a giant 4-foot statue, and a bust), **Aphrodite IX** (full-size statue) and **Magdalena** (full-size statue and a bust).

**Witchblade** created by David Wohl & Michael Turner

Additionally, Moore recently released Nemo Girl, an original piece evoking images of old sci-fi pulp covers.

As readers of *CBM*, and fans of Golden, Silver, and Bronze Age comics, you may find many of the above character, creator, and publisher names unfamiliar. But, as I detailed in my column in *CBM* #92 ("So What Should I Collect?"), "I have pieces in my personal collection featuring characters whose comics I've never read—but their statues were too cool not to buy! They look good, and I enjoy seeing and displaying them."

And Clayburn Moore's work is indeed "too cool not to buy!"

And *that* should, in this case, be your prime motivator. Haven't read any comics published since 1975? Aside from being terminally narrow-minded, you're closing yourself off from a large pool of interesting stories and characters.

Yes, there have been a lot of low points over the last 20 years. But let's be honest here for a second. Despite our fond childhood memories and our collector's pretensions, there was also a *lot* of crap published during the first 50 years of comic books, side-by-side with the genuine classics. Does that stop us from enjoying the visual imagery of some old-time characters we refused to read as kids because we found them "lame," but have retroactively deemed "classic" or an icon"?

So, look at the images accompanying this article, and tell me at least one of those pieces wouldn't look great adorning the shelf in your den or office, read her comic or not! ☜.

Katchoo created by Terry Moore in **Strangers in Paradise**

Francine created by Terry Moore in **Strangers in Paradise**

## THE MARKET

*[continued from page 80]*

$20; Haunt of Horror #5 VF $22; Henry Brewster #6 VF $15; Herbie #5 FN $42; Hollywood Secrets of Romance (I.W. Pub) #9 VF $20; Hot Stuff, the Little Devil #25 (7/60) VF $35, #100 VG $9; In the Days of the Mob #1 VF $85; Josie and the Pussycats #45 VG $39, #106 VG $14; Katy Keene #33 (1990) VF $35; Laugh #21 FN $120; Life with Archie #6 FN $24; Little Lulu #261 G $12, Magazineland (DC giveaway) VG $20; Marvel Spotlight #5 VF $90; Mickey Mouse #208 GD $15; Millie the Model #192 FN $18; Millie the Loveable Monster #1 FN $25; National Lampoon 1964 High School Yearbook Parody NM $99; Oktoberfest Comics (1976 Dave Sim) #1 VF $20; Our Love Story #1 VF $60, #5 VG $25; Outlaws of the West #11 (1st Issue) FA $10; Popeye #158 VF $24, #159 FN $16; Richie Rich #10 VG $45; Pow Magazine #3 VF $50; Santa Claus Funnies #2 (1943) G $25; Scooby Doo (Gold Key) #1 VG $50; Scream (Skywald) #11 VF $35; Sick #19 FN $20, #35 FN $20; Summer Love #47 F $12; Sub-Mariner Comics #32 (Origin 1949) no front cover, rest VF $100; Superman # 63 Canadian Variant Edition G $59; Surf N Wheels #1 VF $30; Swordquest #3 (DC giveaway) VG $15; Tender Love Stories #1 FN $20; 3-D Dolly #1 (12/1953) VG $59; T-Man #1 G $49, #27 VG $24, Thrills Comics #NN (Canada, Feb 1951, 164 pages) FN $150; Tweety and Sylvester #105 VG 12; Yellow Submarine with Poster FN $89.

*Opinions expressed in* CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

# The Michael Naiman Report

# Super, Boy!

My hectic days usually start at dawn with a couple of cups of strongly brewed coffee and a gander at the local fishwrap. After a cursory scan of the latest front page tragedy and a look at the box scores, I must go directly to the three pages of comics in the Currents Section. A good chuckle to start the day is a must— especially this early in the AM!

It always amazes me that the artist/writers who produce these little gems can do this day-after-day, year-after-year and continue to be funny! Every so often, one of these strips incorporates a comic book reference that just blows me away. And when it refers to one of my favorite comic book characters, all the better! The latest strip to do so is entitled Nest Heads by John Allen.

**Nest Heads** by John Allen

I REALLY THOUGHT "SMALLVILLE" WOULD BE DIFFERENT.
SURE, IT MAKES ME FEEL OLD WHEN EACH SUPERMAN ACTOR IS YOUNGER THAN THE ONE BEFORE.
BUT "SMALLVILLE" IS ABOUT SUPER-BOY! SUPERBOY IS SUPPOSED TO BE YOUNG!
WHAT WENT WRONG?
I THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH MA KENT.
11/6 ALLEN

Now, one must (should) know that trying to "explain" a comic strip/joke/reference to someone else can only end one way—in disaster! You'd think that I'd have learned my lesson by now. As I launched into explaining to the Woman in My Apartment the Lana Lang/Annette O'Toole/Superman the Movie/Smallville/Ma Kent irony and crossover of it all, I should have been prepared for the reaction.

The strip's reference to the latest television adaptation of the Superman saga elicited a response of "Oh, I thought that Smallville was a show about little people!

And in my best Homer Simpson, I had no choice but to respond with… "D'oh!"

Reading the Nest Heads strip with the Superboy/Smallville reference got me thinking again about the Superboy title during it's heyday of the Silver Age. This title along with Superboy's Adventure appearances was at the top of my monthly "must buy" list. Sure the plots were simple, but for my time and place they provided just the right amount of escapism and projection fantasy that a youngster could use.

The Superboy stories fell into some predictable storylines. You had the Super Animals/Super Infant group, Sci-Fi, Mystery, Imaginary tales, Krypto stories, tales of friendship and sometimes even political-type statement stories.

For those interested in the PC type of stories, look at issue 78 (1/60) with Claire Kent, Alias Super-Sister dealing with feminism way before it became a popular cause; #80 (4/60) The Shyest Boy In Town, having to do with individuality; #85 (12/60) The Mystery of Mighty Boy, which carried a disarmament theme; and in issue 95 (3/62) The Super Family From Krypton dealing with civil rights.

When Superboy was introduced in More Fun #101 in January 1945, the art was handled by Joe Shuster with the assistance of his shop. Marvin Stein was Shuster's primary assistant during the early Superboy

*[continued on page 74]*

# CBM MarketWatch

**A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman**

**Detective**
#241 GD $27 81%
#265 VG+ $70 90%
#275 FN $45 71%
#310 VF $50 94%
#319 FN $21 Guide
#320 FN $39 1.52X
#321 FN $27 1.29X
#333 NM $55 Guide
#386 VF $22 76%
#389 NM $36 80%
#392 NM $28 80%

**Dick Tracy**
#1 VG $80 Guide

**Donald Duck**
#85 NM $30 66%
#88 VF+ $20 69%
#90 VF+ $20 69%

**Doom Patrol**
#91 VF+ $65 1.22X

**Fantastic Four**
#12 VF- $313 35%
#21 VF- $65 41%
#27 VF $120 1.02X
#39 VI $40 55%
#42 VF $65 1.12X
#44 VI $50 86%
#88 VF+ $25 93%
#107 NM $25 Guide

**Fantastic Four Annual**
#1 NM- $950 Guide

**Fast Willie Jackson**
#2 VF $12 2X

**Flash**
#105 GD+ $425 1.14X
#154 VF $21 38%
#162 VF $18 36%
#163 VF $18 36%

**Fruitman Special**
#1 FN $15 1.66X

## THE NAIMAN REPORT

*[continued from page 73]*

days. His inks were seen in most of the More Fun run.

In late 1946 John Sikela, returning from the war, became the primary Superboy artist This lasted until Siegel and Shuster departed from DC and began suing for ownership over Superman and Superboy copyrights. The last Siegel and Shuster by-line appeared in Adventure #118 in August of 1947.

Ed Dobrotka took over most of the Superboy artwork after the departure of Joe Shuster and John Sikela in 1947. After Sikela left to work on Funnyman with Jerry Siegel, Ed Dobrotka continued on Superboy, often working with other inkers such as Win Mortimer, Ray Burnley and Stan Kaye.

In 1949, after the failure of Siegel and Shuster's Funnyman, John Sikela returned to work for DC and began drawing Superboy almost exclusively. The addition of a Superboy comic book to the lineup meant a need for additional artists, so Curt Swan also began doing Superboy stories starting with Superboy #5.

Entering the 1950s, Superboy's artistic mainstays continued to be John Sikela and Curt Swan. Other artists also occasionally contributed Superboy art including Wayne Boring and Al Plastino. One of Plastino's main contributions to the Superman legend was drawing the very first appearance of the Legion of Super-Heroes in Adventure Comics #247 in April 1958. He continued drawing Superboy up until Mort Weisinger turned over the editing to Murray Boltinoff in 1968.

George Papp was one of the earliest artists at DC, doing fillers and cartoons in some of the early Superman issues Papp took over Superboy from John Sikela when he retired in 1958 and continued penciling and inking stories up until early 1967.

Chic Stone penciled Superboy for about a year in 1967-68, having been brought in to give the book more of a Marvel look. Beginning with Superboy #149 Murray Boltinoff became editor. His stories for the most part featured credits. Bob Brown and Wally Wood took over the art on the strip and ushered in a new era of artistic excellence for the Boy of Steel.

Looking at the run of these books, it is very difficult to find them in high grade. They were well read and enjoyed by millions—not hoarded for future profits and speculation. I have found that when examining this series' run between numbers 30-99, issues 61-69 appear to hold their value when compared to the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide's valuations. I believe that scarcity also plays a role here. But, one must also take into consideration the range of the GD ($16) and VG ($27) prices that are listed in the Guide. The other books in the run can be obtained for between 40-75% of Guide in either GD or VG condition. If one wants to pay big dollars for higher-grade Superboy books, you'll probably only find them in a slabbed condition. For my money, these books are worth having for their reading enjoyment and the wonderful range of artistic interpretations that appear throughout the run.

I have a few more comic strip/comic book funnies I'd like to share—but that's for another month. Until next time!

**GI Joe**
#1 NM $24 1.6X
#2 NM $24 1.6X
#21 VF $18 2.57X
#155 VF $35 3.18X

**Giant Size X-Men**
#1 VF $225 39%
#1 VF $163 28%

**Golden Comics Digest**
#4 VF $45 1.6X
#7 VG $25 3.12X
#21 NM $40 2X
#31 VG $15 1.87X

**Green Lantern**
#75 NM $33 83%

**Haunt of Horror (magazine)**
#5 VF $22 1.83X

**Hawkman**
#1 FN $133 89%

**Henry Brewster**
#6 VF $15 1.5X

**Herbie**
#5 FN $42 1.4X

**Hot Stuff**
#25 VF $35 1.2X
#100 VG $9 2.25X

**In the Days of the Mob**
#1 VF $85 1.51X

**Incredible Hulk**
#5 FR+ $110 2X
#102 VF- $92 60%
#104 VF $67 1.03X
#2 FN $600 1.06X
#3 FN+ $580 1.55X
#5 FN+ $450 1.33X
#5 VG $202 89%
#180 NM $150 1.25X

**Iron Man**
#1 VF $103 34%
#2 VF $71 71%
#2 VF $75 75%
#9 VF $49 1.29X
#10 VF $49 1.29X

**It Rhymes With Lust**
#nn VG $450 3.81X

**JLA**
#9 VG $27 33%
#49 VF+ $29 76%
#55 VG+ $13 93%

**JO-JO**
#18 VG+ $150 1.6X

**Johnny Hazard**
#6 VG- $19 54%
#7 VG $17 78%

**Josie and the Pussycats**
#45 VG $39 2.43X
#106 VG $14 4.66X

**Journey Into Mystery**
#124 NM $121 1.1X

**Katy Keene (1990)**
#33 VF $35 5X

**Laugh**
#21 FN $120 1.14X

**Life with Archie**
#6 FN $24 1.14X

**Little Lulu**
#261 GD- $12 12X

**Marvel Spotlight**
#5 VF $90 1.29X

**Marvel Tales**
#1 VG+ $32 55%

**Marvel Team-Up**
#1 NM $225 1.5X

**Metal Men**
#6 VF $50 89%

**Mickey Mouse**
#208 GD- $15 3.75X

**Millie the Loveable Monster**
#1 FN $25 1.66X

**Millie the Model**
#192 FN $18 2X

**Mystery in Space**
#76 NM $49 35%
#93 VF $17 50%

**NoMan**
#1 FN $8 33%

**Our Love Story**
#1 VF $60 1.58X
#5 VG $25 1.56X

**Out Of The Night**
#2 VG $50 53%

**Popeye**
#158 VF $24 1.85X
#159 FN $16 2.66X

**Richie Rich**
#10 VG $45 1.23X

**Riot**
#3 FN- $70 1.17X

**Santa Claus Funnies (1943)**
#2 GD- $25 Guide

**Scooby Doo**
#1 VG $50 2.77X

**Sgt. Fury**
#70 NM $36 2X

**Shazam**
#1 NM $27 1.08X

**Showcase**
#32 VG+ $31 42%
#36 VF $128 32%
#40 VF- $77 38%
#44 VF $23 27%
#56 VF $56 57%

**Sick**
#19 FN $20 1.66X
#35 FN $20 2X

**Silver Surfer**
#4 VG+ $130 1.63X
#8 NM $65 72%

**Strange Tales**
#86 VG $30 94%

**T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents**
#2 VF $38 54%
#2 FN $16 52%
#10 VG $9 71%
#11 FN $9 75%
#13 VG $9 1.12X
#14 FN $10 83%
#15 VG $8 94%
#16 VG $10 1.25X
#16 VG $8 Guide
#17 GD $6 75%
#18 FN $9 73%
#18 VG $8 Guide
#19 VG $8 Guide
#20 NM $16 53%

**Tales to Astonish**
#27 VG- $260 49%

**Tomb of Darkness**
#11 NM $31 2.58X
#15 NM $22 1.83X

**Tower of Shadows**
#2 NM- $46 1.31X
#4 VF $9 53%
#8 NM- $21 60%
#9 NM- $21 60%

**Undersea Agent**
#1 FN $27 1.12X
#2 FN $8 33%
#3 GD $6 1.2X
#5 FN $16 1.03X

**Venus**
#10 GD+ $100 1.37X

**Warlord**
#1 VF $12 68%

**Wham-O Giant Comics**
#1 GD- $20 2.86X

**Wonder Woman**
#168 VF $35 1.17X

**World's Finest**
#4 FN $835 1.09X
#198 VF $21 38%

**X-Men**
#4 GD+ $70 1.19X
#7 VF $154 66%
#10 NM $350 77%
#14 VG+ $50 88%
#28 VG+ $36 1.06X
#49 VF $47 81%
#56 VF $61 1.09X
#87 VF+ $32 1.23X
#96 VF $61 76%
#101 VF $76 1.09X
#109 NM $77 86%
#110 FN+ $25 1.39X
#98 (30¢) VF $179 1.6X
#5 FN $110 85%
#7 FN- $81 86%

**Yellow Submarine (with Poster)**
#nn FN $89 1.29X

# MARKET REPORTS

**Al Stoltz**
**Basement Comics**
**Havre de Grace, MD**
**Basmntcomx@aol.com**

**Baltimore Comic Con** opened its third-year show at the Convention Center in the heart of Baltimore City. Great new larger venue for us, a chance for Maryland to have a shot at becoming a major show town. A collectors' show at its core, plenty of comics and comic related activities to be enjoyed by the lucky fans that added this show to their schedule. Rumor has it that a three-day show in September is a possibility for next year, a great thing since I live a whole 40 minutes away. This could be that show just after the summer madness that dealers are looking for. Positives for the show were many and for a retailer the most important were just a few of the following. Location could not be easier for any person to find, Light Rail runs right next to the Convention Center and Interstate 95 is a mile away. Load in and out was as smooth as it could have ever gotten at a show. Plenty of hotels and food within a few minutes walk are always a super plus on the comic dealers wish list.

Comics in general seem to be still climbing high as **investments** for people in spite of a crumbling stock market. The amount of material we are moving out [illegible] unable to outstrip the amount of collectibles [illegible] offered to us and we are [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

#110 FN $120, #118 FN- $100, #136 FN+ $75, #179 FN $38; Conan #5 VF $35; Daredevil #8 FN $39; Fantastic Four #107 NM $25, #88 VF/NM $25; Fantastic Four Annual #1 NM- $950; Incredible Hulk #2 FN $600, #3 FN+ $580, #5 FN+ $450, #5 VG $902; Metal Men #6 VF $50; Sgt. Fury #70 NM $36; Showcase #43 (James Bond) F/VF $250; Silver Surfer #8 NM- $65; Strange Tales #86 VG $30; Tales to Astonish #36 VG $135 signed by Kirby; Tarzan #60 NM $45; X-Men #5 FN- $110, #7 FN- $81

**BRONZE AGE** All Star Comics #69 NM $22; Amazing Spider-Man #134 NM- $40, Giant-Size Amazing Spider-Man #4 NM- $67; Incredible Hulk #180 NM $150; Marvel Super-Special #1 (KISS) VF $84; Warlord #1 VF $11.

## Heroes and Dragons

1563-B Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29210
Phone (store): 803-731-HERO
Phone (office): 803-772-9198
Fax: 803-772-5010

Ebay traffic remains high, but **prices** are continuing to drop. We're currently running a series of clearance auctions on comic character statues and are having difficulty getting 1/3 of the original retail prices. A few franchises seem immune to this dip—we're making more money on Buffy the Vampire Slayer products than we ever have on eBay—but the trend is a steady decline.

**CGC-certified** comics are always reliable on eBay, but only the hottest and most desirable books are bringing sales rewards. Modern Age books and low-grade Silver Age books just don't garner the interest they used to.

Our number of hits hasn't dropped—only the maximum prices collectors are willing to pay. Ebay is mostly a **buyer's market** going into the holiday season. The best strategy for success is to offer genuinely rare or hard-to-find items, which customers are always willing to pay a premium for.

## Robert Letscher II

Key Comics
PO Box 5035
Mesa, AZ 85211
Phone: 480-890-0055
Fax: 480-890-0220
KeyComics@hotmail.com

After many months, I've finally adapted back to normal society at large, after the over stimulation-lifestyle of the massive **San Diego Comic-Con**. They needed moving walkways, or at least rest areas, as many fans just can't cover that kind of acreage unassisted! About six hours into their "hike" towards the back of the convention center, you see fans with that shell-shocked sensory-overloaded expression, as they drag their feet, long having forgotten what they were looking for!

I must concur with those who stated that there were plenty of comic sellers that were relegated to the "**ghetto**" (the outskirts of the exhibit hall, near the far reaches of the extremely-large exhibit hall at the Convention Center!) this year, and those who were that far from the bustling central portion of the Con reported disappointing sales. If the show organizers don't want to restrict access by an increasingly diverse field of exhibitors, and potentially hinder growth, then I feel it's time to have various exhibitors grouped in such a way that a TV/movie buff can see all the promos, posters and trailers he desires, the toy collectors can avoid walking the extra miles through all the card & comics, while the comic fan can actually have a shot at seeing all the comic sellers without spending half the show in aisles of bobble-heads! (And don't get me started on the parking situation, which was dismal.) If this exciting annual tradition gets any bigger, they need to add a bunch of free shuttles, for around the con, as well as in it!

There is still good demand for a wide array of **back-issues**, from the Golden Age to the more fad-oriented modern books and all eras in between. However, there appears to be mild softening, likely from the beating the stock market is undergoing recently, having some buyers a little nervous. Nevertheless, there are still some respectable recent sales to report:

Amazing Spider-Man #15 VG- $100, #33 VF- $100, #41 VG+ $48, #44 FN+ $42, #47 FN $43, #110 NM- $33, #114 VF $30, #131 NM $39; Captain America #109 VF/NM $50, #111 VF $30, #113 NM- $60, Annual #1 NM- $30; Flash #105 GD/VG $425; Hulk #5 FN+ $110, Mirac eman #15 FN/VF $40; Tales Of Suspense #63 VF- $90, #65 VF $51

Sales of **CGC-graded** comics continue to be strong, with most interest focused on the high-grades, as expected. Here's some recent samples of graded books sold: Treasure Comics #2 (1945) VF+ 8.5 $220; Brave & Bold #42 VF 8.0 $300; Battlestar Galactica #1 (1978) NM/MT 9.8 $70; Shadowman #1 NM+ 9.6 $80; X-O Manowar #1 NM+ 9.6 $61; Magnus #1 NM/MT 9.8 $58, Spider-Woman #1 NM+ 9.6 $50, Scion #1 NM/MT 9.8 $65; Soap Opera Love #1 (1982) NM 9.4 $50; Amazing Spider-Man #298 NM- 9.2 $45; Lady Death Lingerie Leather Ed. NM/MT 9.8 $48.

**Original comic artwork** remains a popular facet of the hobby as well, here's a couple recent examples Ultimate Spider-Man #5 page #1 (Bagley/Thibert) $155; Birds Of Prey #14 page #1 (Land/Geraci) $200

And DC Cover **production art** from the Jack Adler Collection continues to gain fans, as these are but a few of the pieces sold lately: Flash #218 Hand colored Cover $160; Four Star Battle Tales #3 Hand-colored Cover $130, G I Combat #134 Approval Cover $138, Our Army At War #240 Hand colored Cover $150; Phantom Stranger #30 Hand-colored Cover $135, Prez #1 Hand-colored Cover $200, Sinister House Of Secret Love #9 Hand colored Cover With Approval Cover $330, Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane #108 Hand-colored Cover $900, Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane #108 Approved

Cover $100; Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen #151 Hand-colored Cover $130; Swamp Thing #12 Approval Cover $153; Sword Of Sorcery #3 Four-Color Separation $130; Teen Titans #21 Approval Cover $128. As more DC collectors learn of this historic collection, while the remaining selection shrinks, I expect further price growth to be the result.

Recently, I have noticed a large selection of **quality material** has been brought to the market, from various collections/auctions. With such an abundance of books to buy, there should be some great finds for the true fan looking to fill in some holes in the collection. (And hopefully some bargains lurking, for those that don't insist on owning the "finest" copy!) I wish all of you CBM readers the best in all your collecting pursuits.


## Bruce Edwards

Quasar Comics & Collectibles
PO Box 2227
Louisville, KY 40201-2227
www.QuasarComics.com
Bruce@QuasarComics.com


It's been a while since a market report from Quasar Comics. As we ramp back up to our next big auction, we have been placing some items on **eBay** to generate some interest and expose our name again to the collector community.

Ebay sales are very interesting, to say the least. You have a market where it does not take long to get an excellent idea of the true wholesale value of collectibles. Yet at the same time, for in demand items, you are likely to obtain prices that are close to the top of the market value at the time of the sale.

We had a nice Near Mint or better set of original first print hardback **Marvel Masterworks** volumes (all but #26) which were auctioned in July and these prices were obtained: Volume #1 $61, #2 $59, #3 $44, #4 $36, #5 $71, #6 $90, #7 $64, #8 $41, #9 $51, #10 $100, #11 $47, #12 $63, #13 $73, #14 $46, #15 $95, #16 $230, #17 $178, #18 $64, #19 $100, #20 $117, #21 $315, #22 $100, #23 $102, #24 $51, #25 $99 and #27 $127.

We also auctioned a few **Golden Age CGC comics** off, to test the waters for nicer **Golden Age**. Jumbo Comics #80 CGC 9.0 VF/NM $250; #89 CGC 9.2 NM- $315, #90 CGC 9.0 VF/NM $250, #94 CGC 9.2 NM- $390, Wings Comics #98 CGC VF 8.0 (and undergraded as reflected in the price) $150, Popeye #1 Dell CGC 9.0 VF/NM $520 (this was/is a stunning book).

**Non-CGC Silver and Gold** lower end conditions sell well on eBay, provided you are willing take the risk of selling cheap. Since I have not been active on eBay in a while, it did become evident that—as people become more confident with your grading—the bids improved over time. Here are a few examples:

**Golden Age**: Crime Does Not Pay #48 VG $19.95, #50 G/VG $11.45, #62, 66 and 68 all VG at $9.95 each, #127 VG $9.95; Johnny Hazard #6 VG- $18.58, #7 VG $17.27; Little Al of the Secret Service #2 VG $42.56; Soldier of Fortune #6 VG+ $20.59; Spy Hunters #8 VG $16.05; Spy and Counter-Spy #2 GD+ $17.95; White Rider and Super-Horse VG/F $21.50.

**Silver Age**: Amazing Spider-Man #15 VG $36, #17 GVG $39.98; Atom #1 FA $9.95 (talk about cheap!); Batman #200 VG $19.95; Daredevil #3 GD+ $37.95, #4 VG- $22.72, #11 FN+ $19.95; JLA #9 VG $26.99; Showcase #32 VGF $31; Teen Titans #6 VF $9.95, #8 VF- $14.50.


## Scott McAdam

8418 Greenspoint Dr.
Rowlett, TX 75088
972-463-7011
smcatoyguy@aol.com


Hello again from cold and rainy Dallas. It seems to me that selling a comic should not be this hard. It goes without saying that there is less show in Texas than there was in California, but there is still eBay. What a joke! Ebay has turned into a place for **high-end investors** (they are not collectors or they would not exclusively collect **encapsulated** books that they cannot even look at, let alone read) and **bottom feeders that** are getting such great bargains from un-knowledgeable **flea market, garage/estate** sellers that. **Overstreet** has gone right out the door. If I sound a little discouraged, I am. I finally got in on the **CGC** bandwagon right as they started to strict up their grading. All of a sudden they grade stricter than I do—go figure.

I have been describing comics for the Heritage Comics Auctions lately and have been seeing many people's comics that must have been sent in a long time ago, to get the grades that are listed on them. They are definitely partial to key Golden Age and certainly they are big fans of "Mile-High" books. Enough of the soap box crap.

Here are a few books I did **sell** lately: Donald Duck and the Gilded Man FC #422 CGC 9.4 NM $1500 (4X Guide), that was my reserve on eBay; Phantom Lady #14 (#2) CGC FN- 5.5 (~$1000 by Overstreet) $761; Popular Comics #4 VG ($262 in Overstreet) $149.99 on my second listing after I dropped the price (this is from 1936; someone else emailed to offer me $50, I cannot say here what I wanted my reply to be to this insult). Adventure #300 FR/GD $20 "Buy it Now" (worth about $26); All-New Comics #1 CGC FN 6.0 ($857 in FN 6.0 Overstreet) $499.99 minimum bid; Atom #1 CGC FN 6.0 ($207 in FN Overstreet) $169 minimum bid.

**Original art**: Atari Force cover #8 by Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez (hand-colored) $308; Golden Age Green Lantern drawing by Gil Kane (framed) for $400.

I sold at the **Dallas Comic Con** that shared its venue with the Heritage Comics Signature sale. I did what I considered to be OK—$1500 in sales with one table ($150). I cannot remember a single item I sold of any interest, the best sale was three pieces

of art for $330: a '40s-'50s Joe Palooka piece, a Pink Panther original cover and a nice Winnie-the-Pooh finished drawing by Mike Royer; $300 worth of high-grade Amazing Spider-Mans between #60-170 for $225.

That is about all that I can tell you for right now. I guess I just wish I could get some comics that Heritage can sell for me to those 100 people in this country that are multi-millionaires who can buy whatever they feel like and pay whatever they have to to get it.

## Terry's Comics

PO Box 2232
Orange, CA 92859
Phone: 714-288-2993
Fax: 714-288-8992
E-mail: info@terryscomics.com
www.terryscomics.com

If we are in an economic slowdown then I could not tell it from **San Diego** or any other later shows. I had my best conventions ever this summer. I sold every age, type and genre of comics and related items that can be imagined. Every dealer I talked to said they were having a great show also. Some of the more interesting items I sold were comic-related pins, illustrated travelers' guides from the 1890s, calendars from the 1970s, Heavy Metal magazine, Time magazine with comic-related stories, lobby cards from the 1940s and Star Trek greeting cards. No other convention compares to San Diego when it comes to dollars spent and the diversity of items that one can sell to collectors. Some sales of note were:

**GOLDEN AGE**: Marvel Mystery #49 CGC 7.5 $2000; All Star #11 GD/VG $450; Mickey Mouse FC #79 FA $50; Marvel Mystery #91 VG- $475; Zip #33 GD/VG $275, #30 VF $550, #27 GD/VG $375, #8 FN+ $500; Pep #24 GD $300, #8 GD/VG $280; Jack Pot #5 GD+ $350; Blue Ribbon Comics #21 VG+ $350; Human Torch #33 VG $380.

**ATOMIC AGE**: It Rhymes With Lust GD/VG $450; Strange Mysteries #5 FN $70; Adventures into Darkness #13 GD/VG $40; Venus #10 GD+ $100; Crime Must Stop NN VG $180; Out Of The Night #2 GD/VG $50; JO-JO #18 VG/FN $150, #28 VG/FN $150; Jetta #6 VF/NM $100; Dick Tracy #1 VG $80, famous Funnies #210 FA $90; Riot #3 FN- $70.

**SILVER AGE**: Hulk #1 GD/VG $1100; Fantastic Four #27 VF $120; Amazing Spider-Man #1 CGC 6.0 $250, #2 VG $600, #4 GD/VG $250, #5 FN $600, #6 VG/FN $350; Captain America #100 VF $300; Doom Patrol #91 VF/NM $65.

**MAGAZINES**, etc.: 35 Starlogs $275; Star Wars box set $150; Burroughs's box (bug chew) $150; Heavy Metal #1 NM $30; Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #2 NM (1st) $50; Savage Tales #1 VF/NM $125; Blazing Combat #3 FN/VF $16.

## Michael Tierney

### Collector's Edition - North Little Rock, Arkansas
### The Comic Book Store - Little Rock, Arkansas

With all the **movies** being made about comic book characters, there is a strong sense of anticipation about the future of comics across the marketplace today. As Marvel continues to miss opportunities with short-sighted **short-print policies**, I have to wonder if the same management team will still be fully intact by the time that these words see print. Whenever a publisher encourages retailers to hoard the last couple of copies of a brand new book and mark it up several times, there is great cause for concern. On behalf of the majority of retailers, I'd like to reassure comic readers everywhere that this is not an accepted strategy—in fact, retailers who practiced this type of price gouging were among the first to go under when the marketplace shrank during the latter part of the Nineties.

My personal philosophy is: when my cost goes up, then my price goes up—which is real supply and demand, not market manipulation. A perfect example of this is the brisk activity currently being enjoyed by G.I. Joe and Transformers back issues. While the demand is strong, so is the supply. These puppies fly out the door at Guide prices, and collectors are happy to liquidate their collections at a percentage of that value.

An area of older comics in short supply, which continues to be largely overlooked, is that of **black-and-white magazines**. We sold a copy of Creepy #1 (Frazetta art) in GD for $15 the day we got it in. Savage Sword of Conan and the reprint Saga line move fast at Guide and higher, while the color Conan comics continue to languish in the bins. Hard-to-find titles, like Deadly Hands of Kung Fu, move in any grade. If you've been thinking about beefing up this part of your collection, now is the time.

**Silver Age** Marvel and DC continue to be the comics with the highest demand.

Recent **Marvel** examples are: Fantastic Four Annual #1 GD- $49, #102 FN+ $17.50; Strange Tales #164 FN $13.25; Thor #110 FN+ $19; X-Men #14 VG+ $49.50, #28 (1st Banshee) VG+ $36, #87 VF+ $32, #110 FN+ $25, #244 NM $20.

Considering the size of the Spider-Man selection we have to offer, I'm surprised that the following were the only key sales to report on this popular character: Amazing Spider-Man #21 (2nd Beetle) GD- $29, #28 (1st Molten Man) GD- $31, #29 GD+ $19.50, #42 GD+ $27.50, #100 GD+ $22.75, #101 (1st Morbius) GD+ $18.50, #162 NM $21.75; Giant-Size #2 VF+ $19.50, Giant-Size #4 (3rd Punisher) VF+ $19.50. It will be interesting to see how the Spider-Man movie's video release affects interest in the webslinger.

As expected, Batman and Superman lead the way for **DC Comics**. Examples are: Action #96 (CGC graded 4.0) $114.95, #313 NM $ 25, #337 NM $22, Batman #198 FN $19.75; Detective Comics #310 VF $50, #319 FN $21, #320 FN+ $32, #321 FN $27, #396 FN-

$17.50, #333 NM $55, #368 FN- $19.50, #386 VF $22; Hawkman #1 FN- $133; JLA #49 (1st series) VF+ $29, #55 (Intro Earth 2 Robin) VG+ $13; JLA #1 (2nd Series) NM $15.50.

Again, the future of the industry looks bright, as the public's perception of comics has never been more positive. Hopefully, the next boom will be created by readers and not speculators.

## Steve Wyatt
supercon@winfirst.com

This has been a good few months for me and comics. I have been selling a lot of Silver Age. **Neal Adams** books in high grade have been doing exceptionally well. I sold a Green Lantern run in NM all for full Guide (the #76 was actually priced about 20% over actual Guide, but Guide is low on that book in high grade); an X-men #56 in VF+ $90; Weird Western Tales #12 in VF/VF+ for $100; a Spectre #5 in NM for $100; and Archie Joke Book #41 in F/VF went for $140.

The recent New York trip brought a large sale of **low-grade DC Silver**. I can't really name exacts (because I was selling by the stack), but the early '60s titles like Sea Devils, Hawkman, Green Lantern and Flash have been selling so well I am almost out of all my stock on these titles. I am heading out to The National in New York with a five-long box collection of DC from 1958 to 1964 with all the 1st appearances and #1s.

CGC is slowing down. The older and highest graded copies haven't, but, the other grades have showerd slowing. In Portland I sold a lot of Silver and Bronze Marvels. Conan #1 in F/VF $140; Sub Mariner #1 in VF $80; Silver Surfer #1 and #4 both in VF for $1000. Spider-Man has slowed down, but I seem to be selling a lot of Avengers (mostly the John Buscema issues). All in all, the industry seems strong right now. I don't have a show, but I am now traveling all around the country, and I am having my best year ever (Wondercon, San Diego con, Wizard con, Motor City and NY have all been better this year). I hope 2003 is as good to everyone as I hope it is to me. Take Care.

## Doug Sulipa's Comic World
Box 21986
Steinbach Manitoba R5G 1B5
Canada
cworld@mb.sympatico.ca
Phone: 204-346-3674

The last couple months have been extremely busy, as hundreds of people are now finding us on our website. Most of what we sold recently was items not found in most other dealer inventories, and buyers are elated when they stumble onto us. In most cases, condition is not a big concern. We have been too busy to list much on eBay, except for about 100 CGC comics, but many have slowed from even four months ago. **CGC buyers** are getting picky, as too many items are on eBay.

We have sold many **non-comic** items to happy buyers, including: Biker/Motorcycle mags, National Lampoon, True Detective mags, TV Guides, old video game mags, western paperbacks and wrestling mags. We also sold a bunch of vintage men's exploitation and adventure mags of the 1950s-70s, with great Nazi, bondage, bikers, whipping and other covers. Magazines of all types are again on the upswing, but especially Warren and 1970s Marvel titles.

Canadian "**Whites**" of the 1940s are blazing hot, but stock is unfindable, as prices have risen 500% in the last three years. We sold a lot of IW and Super Comics, once we made a detailed list of the contents. Many have Pre-Code reprints and none have a Comics Code, though released circa 1958-64. They remain one of the few bargains of the Silver Age period and an affordable category for completists. Watch for future growth here.

But, in general we sold more Pre-1970 **Archie and Harvey** comics than anything, with almost 50% of our older stock gone in the last six months. Next best selling on our website are a wide assortment of Dell and Gold Key titles, many sought by non-collectors.

**Neal Adams** and Steranko comics are rising in demand, with emphasis on their most classic material followed by anything hard to find. We have many Wrightson completists, but most are down to tough non-comic wants. There has been a notable increase in demand for comics with Pete Morisi art, since the recent Comic Book Artist article. We are having a great time selling hard-to-find items to fans who truly appreciate it. In general, few people find our website on most Marvel and DC comics, likely as they encounter too many other sites when looking for more common material. But recently the hot periods for both companies is early 1960s and 1969-1974. As can be seen in the **noteworthy sales below**, uncommon material has been our recent bestsellers. Until next time, back to work.

Air Pirate Funnies #2 VF$35; Archie Annual #4 FN $125; Archie's Festival #NN VG $12; Archie's Roller Coaster #NN VG $12; Avenger (I.W. Pub.) #9 VG $10; Battle of the Planets #8 VF $45, #9 VG $29; Best of Spidey Super Stories (Fireside Books) FA $12; Blast #1 VG $25, Blazing Combat #1 VG $60; Centipede (DC Giveaway) VF $18; Classic Comics #14 (HRN #15) G $90; Cosmo the Merry Martian #1 G $19; Creepy #146 VG $35; Daisy and Donald #45 VF $25; Daredevil #131 VF $39, #168 VF $49; DC Graphic Novel #4: Hunger Dogs VF $50; Dennis the Menace Pocket Full of Fun #1 G $22; Fast Willie Jackson #2 VF $12; Foxhole (Super; Kirby-a) #12 VF $26; Frontier Romances (I.W. Pub.) #9 VF $20; Fruitman Special #1 FN $15; Golden Comics Digest #4 VF $45, #7 VG $25, #21 NM $40, #31 VG $15; GI Joe: A Real American Hero #1 NM $24, #2 NM $24, #21 VF $18, #155 VF $35; Hansi, the Girl Who Loved the Swastika #nn FN

*[continued on page 72]*

# THE MAGIC OF HERITAGE!

WHAT MAKES HERITAGE THE UNCHALLENGED LEADER WHEN IT COMES TO SETTING RECORD PRICES FOR COMICS, ORIGINAL COMIC ART, MOVIE POSTERS AND COMIC RELATED MEMORABILIA?

MAYBE IT'S OUR KILLER WEBSITE, WHERE MEMBERS CAN BID ON-LINE, SUBMIT COMICS TO CGC FOR GRADING WITH A 20% DISCOUNT, RESEARCH OUR PAST AUCTION ARCHIVES (WITH PRICES REALIZED RIGHT NEXT TO FULL DESCRIPTIONS AND ENLARGEABLE IMAGES OF EVERY LOT WE'VE EVER SOLD!), AND EVEN SUBMIT THEIR OWN MATERIAL FOR AUCTION.

MAYBE IT'S OUR AGGRESSIVE MARKETING AND PROMOTION EFFORTS, WHICH HAVE RESULTED IN COVERAGE BY THE TODAY SHOW, ABC MORNING NEWS, WALL STREET JOURNAL, NEW YORK TIMES, USA TODAY, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, NEW YORK POST, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, NATIONAL ENQUIRER, AP, UPI, AND HUNDREDS OF OTHER RADIO, PRINT, INTERNET AND TV OUTLETS WORLDWIDE.

MAYBE IT'S OUR TOP-NOTCH CATALOGS WITH FULL-COLOR GLOSSY PAGES AND ENGAGING, INFORMATIVE WRITE-UPS ABOUT EACH LOT.

AND MAYBE IT'S THE FACT THAT, AS COLLECTORS OURSELVES, WE JUST FLAT-OUT LOVE COMICS!

To get in on the fun and consign your comics, original comic art, or comic-related memorabilia to a future Heritage sale, please call John Petty at 214-252-4392 or Ed Jaster at 214-252-4288. To consign movie material, please contact Grey Smith at 214-668-6928.

Remember, our consignors get paid on time, every time. That's a promise Heritage has honored with 100% consistency for over 25 years.

Need immediate cash? Heritage can offer generous cash advances on your consignment or can buy your collection outright.

Or if you'd rather buy, simply order a subscription to our catalogs via our Web site at:

WWW.HERITAGECOMICS.COM

*A free online community of over 7,500 comics enthusiasts.*

HERITAGE
THE WORLD'S LARGEST COLLECTIBLES AUCTIONEER

100 Highland Park Village • Second Floor • Dallas, Texas 75205-2788
1-800-872-6467 • Fax: 214-443-8425
e-mail: Auctions@HeritageComics.com